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ABSTRACT

Papers on aspects of second language teaching include: "Cognitive Approaches to Listening Comprehension" (James S. Noblitt); "Popular Music in a Whole Language Approach to Foreign Language Teaching" (Sue Barry, Sidney Pellissier); "Language Maintenance: Bridging the Gaps in Foreign Language Education" (Jean W. LeLoup, Linda Shinnock); "Meeting the Demands and Challenges of the Foreign Language Methodology Course" (Flore Zephir); "Benefits of Keeping a Reading Journal in the Development of Second Language Reading Ability" (Ana Martinez-Lage); "The Importance of Aspect in the Acquisition of the Past Tenses in Spanish" (Melinda Ristvey); "Authentic Videos in the Classroom" (Joni K. Hurley); and "Teaching with Authentic Foreign Language Materials" (John I. Liontas, Thomas Baginski). A list of SCOLT Advisory Board members is appended. Each article contains references. (MSE)

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DIMENSION '95

The Future is Now

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Robert M. Terry
Editor

Selected Proceedings of the 1995 Joint Conference of the
Southern Conference on Language Teaching
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SOUTHERN CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Review and Acceptance Procedures
SCOLT *Dimension*

The procedures through which articles are reviewed and accepted for publication in the proceedings volume of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) actually begin with the submission of a proposal, including an abstract, to present a session at a SCOLT Annual Meeting. Once the proposal is received, it is read by members of the Program Committee.

After sessions have been accepted, presenters are contacted by the Editor and invited to submit an article for consideration for publication in *Dimension*, the annual volume of conference proceedings. Copies of the publication guidelines are sent to the presenters who indicate an interest in publishing in the annual volume. Prospective authors submit four copies of the manuscript. The articles are then sent, with the title page containing the authors' names and affiliations removed, to the nationally prominent SCOLT Editorial Board, and each article is reviewed by at least three of these specialists. Normally, articles are sent to reviewers who have expertise in the area treated by the article. The reviewers are asked to make one of three recommendations: (1) publish as is, (2) publish after rewriting, or (3) do not publish.

Once these recommendations are received by the Editor, he reads each article and makes the final decision whether or not to publish it. As a result of these procedures, at least three individuals decide whether or not to include the oral presentation in the Annual Meeting, and then four different people read and approve the article before it is selected toappear in *Dimension*.

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Introduction

The 1995 conference of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) was held in Charleston, South Carolina, with the annual meeting of the South Carolina Foreign Language Teacher's Association (SCFLTA). The theme of the joint meeting was "The Future is Now."

The future is indeed now! There are monumental changes currently occurring in foreign language education. The National Standards, now entitled "Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century," were being discussed. The implications of their implementation were felt and even addressed in many presentations. Changes are already occurring; more changes will have to be made, not only in what we teach but in how we teach. The articles in the 1995 volume of *Dimension* all provide aspects of our map to the future.

Our keynote speaker, Professor James S. Noblitt, in his keynote speech, "Teachers, Textbooks, and Technology: The Use of Interactive Media in Language Learning," has written the lead article for this year's *Dimension*, "Cognitive Approaches to Listening Comprehension," based on his speech. Noblitt addresses how to work with listening comprehension in the foreign language classroom—it is a classic 'learn-by-doing' task. It is the role of teachers to help students develop effective strategies for listening to texts, primarily by listening for key elements around which to construct meaning. Noblitt cautions that materials for listening comprehension have been designed as if hearing were solely an acoustic phenomenon. In his article, he stresses how intended meaning is negotiated in another language, in turn showing how this negotiation can be used in the development of listening comprehension strategies.

Sue Barry and Sidney Pellissier, in their article "Popular Music in a Whole Language Approach to Foreign Language Teaching," illustrate how popular contemporary music can be integrated into a foreign language classroom, bringing with it a "world with values and cultural assumptions." These assumptions are most often outside the learners' world experience. Therefore, popular music in its authentic or 'whole' context can expose learners to themes from the target culture that are functional, interesting, and relevant. The authors provide sample thematic units in both French and Spanish.

In "Language Maintenance: Bridging the Gaps in Foreign Language Education," Jean W. LeLoup and Linda Shinnock discuss second language attrition (SLAT), a phenomenon that is widely felt and scarcely studied. This article reviews second language attrition research, focusing on those factors that appear to have an impact on language and skill loss and offering suggestions for what can be done in a formal classroom and how language attrition can be combatted or at least minimized in its effect. The authors recommend maintenance-oriented strategies in three different periods of learning—the instructional, incubation, and post-incubation periods of instruction. The authors discuss how "attention to second language attrition research needs to inform the instructional plan and be factored into classroom activities."

Flore Zéphir, in her article, "Meeting the Demands and Challenges of the Foreign Language Methodology Course," talks about the current state of reform in teacher education. With the changes that are taking place in foreign language teaching, there must be concomitant changes in teacher education if there will be any hope for us to keep up with our new, "reformed" foreign language education curriculum. Zéphir makes a very strong point in stating that "it is incumbent on foreign language education programs to provide teachers with the decision-making, reflective, and evaluative skills necessary to respond to the needs of the learners of the ever-changing classrooms of the twenty-first century."

The focus of Ana Martinez-Lage's article, "Benefits of Keeping a Reading Journal in the Development of Second Language Reading Ability," is that reading is no longer considered a "passive" skill, but that "reading is characterized by active engagement through which meaning is created." Martinez-Lage underlines the interrelationship between reading and writing, indicating that if students keep journals their writing ability will be enhanced. In this article, the author advocates using the journal to verbalize the learners' thoughts and strategies that occur during the reading process, thereby expressing in writing what they bring to the text as well as creating their own meaning.

Melinda Ristvey, in "The Importance of Aspect in the Acquisition of the Past Tenses in Spanish," brings us a view of not only the correct use of past tenses—i.e., the preterit and imperfect tenses—in Spanish but of the implications in meaning of these tenses. She indicates that the primary difficulty that arises for learners of this system of tense classification and use is not so much the use of different tenses but of the contrasts in aspect that exist between them. The author has carried out a case study to examine the nature of student errors in the use of the preterit and imperfect tenses after the students had been taught to recognize aspectual clues.

The final two articles in *Dimension '95* address the use of authentic materials in the foreign language classroom. In the first article, Joni K. Hurley discusses the uses of "Authentic Videos in the Classroom," stressing that there are two basic categories of videotapes used for educational purposes—those National-Geographic-like portrayals of curious customs and those that transform other cultures into miniature replicas of our own. Such a strong dichotomy only fosters the cultural view of "us" and "them"—a view that Hurley tries to dispel through describing techniques for the effective use of teacher-made unscripted videotapes.

The second article, "Teaching with Authentic Foreign Language Materials," is written by John I. Liontas and Thomas Baginski. These authors also talk about the implementation and use of unedited authentic materials in the foreign language classroom. Authentic materials are becoming more and more important in today's classrooms, and teachers are becoming more and more responsible for selecting and using appropriate materials for teaching purposes. Liontas and Baginski give teachers guidance in evaluating potential authentic materials with a series of six questions for selecting authentic texts and then 20 questions for effectively working with the materials.

Yes, the future is indeed now! The eleven authors of the articles in *Dimension '95* all illustrate the innovations that are currently happening in today's foreign language classrooms and point the way to effective classroom instruction in our classrooms as we approach a new century and beyond.

Acknowledgments

The Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) would again like to recognize the commitment of Valdosta State University in supporting the work of our organization and of foreign language education in general. Its generosity in providing us with the help necessary to make SCOLT play a very strong role in the profession cannot go unnoticed. I would especially like to thank Lee Bradley of Valdosta State University, Executive Director of SCOLT, for his tireless and eminently professional work with SCOLT and its publications, especially *Dimension*.

I would also like to thank Mr. Vince Vanderheijden, my student assistant during the early phases of the preparation of this volume, who helped me keep my head above water.

I am extremely fortunate to have a top-quality, nationally-recognized Editorial Board who scrupulously read every article submitted for consideration for publication, offering invaluable suggestions to the authors. It is because of the professional knowledge of such an eminently qualified Editorial Board that this publication has become recognized in the field of foreign language education. Simple thanks are not enough, but they recognize that they have made a valuable contribution.

— Robert M. Terry
Editor, *Dimension '95*

1

Cognitive Approaches to Listening Comprehension

James S. Noblitt
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

In the mind of the beginner, there are many possibilities.
In the mind of the expert, there are few.
- Zen saying

Introduction

I have always been impressed with how much more native speakers hear in their own language than I do. The participants in a conversation, with nodding heads and animated faces, seem to process everything with ease. The outsider, even with advanced language training, struggles to keep up. For members of the culture, much is taken for granted and important communications take place without explicit linguistic reference. To the novice, the flow of speech seems continuous, with no clear indication of even the boundaries of meaningful elements. It seems there is not enough time to process the current input before the next utterance is presented to the ear.

Instructors know, of course, that listening comprehension is a classic "learn-by-doing" task. The learner must adopt the strategy of listening for key elements around which to construct meaning, while moving along with the flow of discourse. In reader mode, of course, one may rescan the text to solve difficulties, since the reader controls how information reaches the eyes. Listening is really quite different. (You may *read* from left to right, but you can't *listen* from left to right!) The instructor cannot effectively ask the student to "listen faster," nor does study of vocabulary and grammar *per se* produce direct improvement in hearing at the rate native speakers speak.

Practice with tape recordings of spontaneous speech can be useful, but students report that it is difficult to maintain concentration for more than a brief period of time. In any case, listening labs have not produced particularly dramatic improvement in comprehension. Even when well designed, most tape recordings offer few opportunities for interaction; and once the content of a tape recording is understood, it offers no opportunity to rehearse rapid comprehension of novel utterances.

Part of the problem, in my opinion, is that materials for listening comprehension are often designed as if hearing were solely an acoustic phenomenon. With this understanding of the issue, producers of pedagogical materials take care to adhere to studio recording conditions. Their objective is to eliminate background noise and emphasize ideal pronunciation to reduce what is considered undesirable variation in input. In real life, of course, people talk at the same time, ambient noise masks speech sounds, and people do not pronounce words as consistently as the written language would lead us to believe. Missing acoustic signals are more than compensated for by situational and contextual elements in the speech event. Although acoustically enhanced recordings are extremely useful for establishing norms, they do not provide practice in dealing with the redundant signals of everyday, situational, listening comprehension.

Relying on classroom exposure for situationally based listening comprehension is likewise constrained in presenting variation in the speech sample. Students who become comfortable with an individual teacher's speech may resist changing to another instructor, even though variation in input is obviously an intrinsic part of learning to understand a foreign language. Clearly, the learner must learn to distinguish what elements of linguistic input remain the same and which are different when there is variation in acoustic input, such as the speaker's age, gender, regional accent, style, or speech register. These differences in speech input are essential ingredients of the learning environment. A single instructor, no matter how talented, cannot provide the needed variation in sampling for proficient listening.

On the other hand, simply dropping the student into an environment where nothing but authentic speech is available does not solve the problem either. In the worst case, students who do not succeed begin to assume that they have no aptitude for language learning and drop out of instruction. Immersion techniques require a lot of time on task and a lot of individual feedback so that the student can confirm or reject the countless interpretations available for raw speech percepts. There is little provision for this process in most academic programs of language instruction. It is an often heard comment among professionals that listening comprehension is a "neglected skill."

Cognitive Elements of Comprehension

It is interesting to note that those who have addressed the listening comprehension problem (e.g., Stevick 1976, Brown 1980, Hatch 1983) take pains to point out that the qualitative aspects of practice are extremely significant. That is, more is not always better, particularly if drill is based on rote learning procedures, for even if adequate speech samples are available, much more is involved in learning to understand what someone is saying, even in one's native language. People "hear" what may be totally lacking in the acoustic input, principally because a significant portion of what people understand is supplied by the context of the speech event. Native speakers draw on vast amounts of shared knowledge to construct meaning when they are listening. It is not so much that the speech sounds "contain" meaning; it is rather that the speech sounds trigger meaning in the minds of the listener. It is in this sense that we may speak of listening comprehension as being essentially cognitive, drawing on support from a number of sources available for general intelligence.

Far from being a "passive" skill, listening requires the active creation of plausible messages from sometimes incomplete acoustic input. As an example, consider this scene in which the husband, changing TV channels, comes across an old film that shows a very young Cary Grant in his first movie. Relying chiefly on the actor's voice quality, the husband recognizes the actor and asks his wife (who is reading) to look at the screen. She studies the screen for a moment before realizing who the actor is. Here is the transcript of the actual exchange:

Example 1: *Telegraphic Speech*

Husband:	"Look, that's, uh..."
Wife:	"Oh. Yes."

The reader can easily fill in the missing elements by assuming that both wife and husband share knowledge of the actor's movie career, that neither has seen the actor's first movie, and that the husband has a temporary lapse of memory concerning the actor's name (but she knows he knows who it is).

The ability to fill in missing information, a commonplace in human behavior, has been termed "analysis by synthesis" by psychologists. (See Clark and Clark 1977, especially Chapter 5, "Perception of Speech.") The term refers to the strategy of internally generating or "shadowing" what people are saying (or doing) so that we may easily predict the next step, or at least reduce the number of possibilities to consider. If you speak very slowly or deliberately, you may find that others do more than shadow: they actually finish sentences for you. We take time to use our full processing capacity only when the situation is highly unusual or unexpected. Without this kind of efficient information processing, we can easily become overwhelmed by input, which of course is exactly the situation the language learner is in.

We deal with sensory overload by creating internal representations of the outside world so that we may deal more efficiently with information. With learning, we cut down on processing time through a mechanism called "feedforward." The physiological basis for this ability, the gamma efferent system, is a relatively recent discovery by brain specialists (Pribram 1971). The phenomena accounted for by the discovery are very familiar, however. Our nervous system allows us to *anticipate*, after learning, the various kinds of feedback that may reach the brain through the sensory system. As long as no change from the norm is encountered, we notice very little, at least consciously. A simple example is how the body adjusts to ambient temperature. (The water is fine once you get in.)

Although difficult to describe objectively, there is a mild discomfort or malaise felt when an unexpected sensation is experienced. For example, I enter an elevator, press "down," and prepare unconsciously to descend. A prior call, however, causes the elevator to go up instead, and I momentarily feel a kind of disequilibrium. Much the same feeling is experienced when, in reality, I have reached the top of the stairway but, in the dark, I expect there to be another stair. Likewise, a startling sensation is produced if I sit in a chair that is softer than expected. I have even noticed an odd feeling when walking up an escalator that is under repair. Although I can easily observe that it is not moving, I still feel motion as I step on. These examples offer a generalization: in each case the feedback simply does not match the feedforward.

Cognitive psychologists are quick to point out that we carry within our central nervous system a kind of "map" of the external world that we refer to continuously as we process information in our surroundings. Cognitive maps offer redundant ways of dealing with problems in everyday life, from finding our way in the dark to opening a door with our arms full of groceries. Highly skilled activities, such as playing a musical instrument from a printed score, require a kind of "fusion" of various representations of the music. Even the amateur pianist can "hear" music in his or her head (its acoustic form), or "see" the notation of a familiar composition (its symbolic form), or "play" the motions of the fingers (its motor form).

Similar effects of analysis by synthesis can be observed in the way humans process speech. Most of what we recall is not retrieved from stored "tapes" of acoustic material; it is rather based on reconstructed "scenarios" that are consistent with what we have observed and learned. Psychologists who have studied eye-witness testimony offer powerful evidence that memory is more a constructive process than a physical "thing." Anyone who has played the parlor trick of passing a story from person to person around the room is impressed at the number of creative changes that occur as each intelligence reinterprets the input according to personal knowledge and bias. A particularly interesting finding is that information that does not fit the cognitive schemata of the listener is simply not processed. Experimenters have inserted an extraneous sentence into an otherwise coherent story to test recall of the intrusive element. Most do not remember that it was even present in the narrative!

A number of strategies have been identified by psycholinguists to account for the way humans process speech. Although we teach grammar for a good understanding of syntactic parsing, there is good evidence that native speakers also use, perhaps even prefer, "semantic parsing" in their everyday listening comprehension. That is, listeners simply fit content words to a scenario that they can easily construct from their knowledge of the world and society. Some of the grammatical cues to meaning may not be actively processed if the message is thought to be understood because of the general meaning and context. This strategy causes trouble only if precision is essential (as in the courtroom) or if hypothesis formation and deduction of meaning are required (as in scientific debate).

Utterances taken out of context are often said to be misunderstood, especially if the syntactic structure is complex. You may wish to try reading the following sentence to a colleague and then asking for an interpretation of the context that it refers to.

Example 2 *Semantic Parsing*

> Since the doctor was not examined by the patient, her lawyer filed a malpractice suit.

If the sentence is read hastily, it is possible to reconstruct a scenario in which the patient sued the doctor for malpractice:

> doctor / not examine / patient / lawyer / sue

In reality, the syntactic structure offers a more complex and unexpected scenario:

> patient / not examine / doctor / lawyer (whose?) / sue

Semantic parsing is often quite satisfactory for getting the gist of a narrative, especially when visual support or pragmatic constraints assist in the analysis. Children (and second language learners), over time, also learn how to add syntactic parsing to their repertoire of strategies for arriving at meaning. I recall a scene in which my daughter, about five years old, was reproached for using the guest towels to dry her hands. When asked to explain why the towels were dirty, she defended herself in the following way:

> I washed my hands because I dried them on the towel!

You have only to substitute the word "and" in place of the word "because" for the sentence to make perfect sense. (That is, replace the subordinating conjunction, which would require a shift in the clause structure, with a coordinating conjunction that retains the clauses in the order of temporal events.) Her attempted shift from semantic to syntactic structures to express causation was apparently more than my daughter could handle under the circumstances.

A great deal of the skill in precise reading lies in the ability to make a correct syntactic parse, but a visual representation is naturally not available to the ear for rescanning, as is the case with the visual system. Effective speakers use rhetorical devices to repeat important information and enlarge upon the imagery available to the hearer, whereas effective writers may exploit the more stable visual medium for effect (Ong 1982). The lesson here is that complex structures (passive negatives with ambiguous scope of reference) make for bad writing and impossible listening. We appear to rely on our store of likely images to mediate in the process of interpreting what we hear. When these are lacking, we may fail altogether to make sense of the input.

Cues to Listening Comprehension

Using the written word as a support for listening comprehension for learners has distinct limitations. For one thing, the learner may skip to the text whenever a difficulty is encountered in hearing, and thus never learn to rely on the ear for information. For another, there are cues available for the ear, such as intonation, that have no representation in writing. Children begin to repeat the tune of language well before they master vocabulary and syntax. It is as if humans find it easier to learn the music than the words; over time, however, the two become paired in an intimate way. An easy example for speakers of English is to try to communicate by humming the words of a set phrase, such as "I don't know." Most speakers will know exactly what you "said," if uttered as an answer to a content question, such as "What are you going to do?"

A little more difficult exercise consists of trying to mismatch intonation and content. The effect is a bit surreal, as the utterance will sound both familiar and strange at the same time. Try the following exchange in you mind's ear:

"Excuse me."
"You're welcome."

It may take a moment to realize that the intonation contours for "Thank you" / "You're welcome" and "Excuse me" / "No problem" can be identical. Routine or frequently repeated phrases often become "stylized" in this way. The point is that the redundant clues offered in the melodic structure of speech assist enormously in processing spoken language. The printed word, obviously, is not the appropriate medium for learning to process intonation.

Another example may help make the point, as well as relate intonation cues to acoustic processing through analysis by synthesis. One evening, while listening to public broadcast radio at Cornell University, I noticed that the announcer used a particular intonation for reporting tie scores (which are rather common in hockey). You may wish to rehearse the effect, noting that an unequal score, (e.g., Boston 3, Pittsburgh 2) does not sound the same as a tie score (e.g., Boston 3, Pittsburgh 3). As Cornell was in the running for first place that particular year, I listened for the results and was surprised to note that I knew the game result well before (in milliseconds) the number was actually said.

Example 3: *Meaning and Intonation*
Uneven - Princeton 4, Brown 2
Uneven - Dartmouth 2, Columbia 1
Tie - Harvard 3, Cornell ?

(If you wish to produce an unsettling effect on the listener, try reading an uneven score with tie score intonation, or vice-versa. The information will be hard for others to process.) Note that the "tie score" intonation is used in other utterances that contain information that is considered identical, such as "If Mary is for it, John is for it."

The culturally determined associations available to native speakers as they listen to one another mediate comprehension in ways that the outsider cannot fully understand. I recall an instance in which the transcribers of a Spanish conversation recorded the phrase, *Me llamo Elgar*. At least two others (including myself) confirmed the transcription, hearing clearly the acoustic sequence [e l g a r]. A native speaker immediately rejected the transcription, saying it should be [e d g a r]. We all listened again intently, trying to determine whether the sound in question was [l] or [d]. Finally our exasperated informant declared that the man's name was "Edgar" because "Elgar" does not exist in Spanish! And that was that.

A last example is offered as an illustration of the surprising role of cognition in the most routine processing of acoustic input. The context is a situation in which a football game is playing in the background, barely attended to by others in the room because of preparations for a Thanksgiving meal. The announcer says, in a matter of fact tone, the following:

Example 4: *Meaning and Rhythm*

Over the middle and through the line, a penalty on the play.

Non-native speakers are to be forgiven if they do not "hear" what immediately came to my mind, no doubt because of the season of the year:

Over the river and through the woods, to Grandmother's house we go.

It turns out that the rhythmic structure of the two utterances is identical. There is a familiar song associated with the line of verse that most members of my culture would recognize immediately.

Naturally the shared cultural associations illustrated by the example above are just the tip of the iceberg. The rich array of material that mediates in comprehension of acoustic input, from childhood songs to works of art, should remind us of the depth of training necessary for truly proficient listening comprehension. But surely there is not enough instructional time to attend to such a vast curricular undertaking! How can we provide our students with a learning environment that provides appropriate skills for going beyond acoustic input?

Multimedia and Listening Comprehension

Current advances in computer-aided instruction offer some straightforward solutions to the problems sketched above. Taking our cue from research in language learning, we should take care to augment our curriculum-based *teaching* program with a corpus-based *learning* environment. That is, students must have access to authentic material if they are to develop appropriate feedforward mechanisms. Computers support a meaningful learning environment for listening comprehension by combining visual, auditory, and textual information with interactivity. Visual support is extremely efficient for providing context and for maintaining interest; textual information (for the literate) is an economical way to provide conceptual support. Interactivity is extremely important, for students must have control of the rate of information presentation if they are to maintain comprehension when using authentic materials.

In my analysis (Noblitt 1993), an adequate learning environment requires support of at least three modes of learning, which may be successfully enhanced by the use of computers.

1. The *sequential mode*, familiar to anyone who has designed a syllabus, provides for a linear presentation of information and takes the student to areas that would not be discovered by browsing or other adventitious means. Samples of speech, song, or works of literature are also sequential, but designed primarily for the expressive rather than analytical use of language.
2. The *relational mode*, familiar to anyone who has used reference works such as dictionaries or maps, provides support for tasks that are open-ended and that require critical thinking. The gathering of relevant material for the task at hand is driven by student query. The information thus acquired takes on meaning by its power to solve problems by analytical means.
3. The *creative mode*, involved in improvisational speech or original writing, provides support for learning-by-doing. Often viewed as the primary objective of language study, the creative mode is essential for instruction stressing communicative competence.

Interactive learning environments can easily incorporate the learning modes described above. Students may comfortably observe the context of an utterance and process holistically all the redundant cues in the visual and acoustic modes. At the same time, they have recourse on demand to relational databases of information in textual form that supports analytical processing and creative use of language. (See Noblitt 1995 for an example of an interactive multimedia application designed to assist the learner in listening comprehension.)

An important motivational feature can be built in with authentic samples of speech and full-motion video. The material provides an opportunity to observe the *expressive* use of language. That is, students can observe the use of language that reflects aesthetic, ethical, or cultural values in addition to purely the communicative or informational intent of an utterance. Although the linguistic material is more complex in content, such examples of language use provide the student with insights that make language study engaging and rewarding. Information technology provides an excellent medium for balancing the analytic or form-focused study of language with a synthetic or content focused learning environment.

The question of balance in language skills is important. Many of our students have learned well to perform in the sense of repeating a dialogue with tolerable accuracy. However, the learner's attempt to enter into an authentic conversation may result in the awkward discovery that his or her ability to speak is not matched by an equal ability to hear. That is, it is easier to ask a question than it is to understand the answer! "Natural" approaches provide for balance by allowing for developmental staging in skill acquisition. As shown by the following sample from child language acquisition, it is normal for listening comprehension to precede spoken ability.

Example 5 *Hearer and Speaker*

What's your name?
Litha.
Litha?
No! Litha.
Lisa?
Yeah. Litha.

What elements in the learning environment assist the learner in gaining skill in processing both the cognitive and acoustic elements of listening? Above all, the learner needs to deal with authentic samples of language in context. Since native speakers of a language appear to listen more to the speaker's intent than raw acoustic input, it is important for the learner to appreciate how intended meaning is negotiated in another language. (See Kramsch 1993, *passim*, and especially p. 196, "The challenge of multimedia.") Intent is informed by an elaborate set of cultural assumptions that are part and parcel of learning the elemental facts of a foreign language. By observing visual and linguistic sensory inputs, the student is able to arrive inductively at intention. The increased complexity of input through interactive multimedia thus enhances cognitive processing and renders the task meaningful.

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2

Popular Music in a Whole Language Approach To Foreign Language Teaching

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Rationale for Whole Language

Whole language programs for first language (L1) learners are based on the premise that language is learned from whole to part, and only later does the learner begin to recognize the parts and to experiment with them to create novel utterances. Whole language programs emphasize language as a means of communication between members of the same language community rather than the object of instruction to be analyzed and dissected. Goodman (1986: 26) argues that "language learning is easy when it's whole, real, and relevant; when it makes sense and is functional; when it is encountered in the context of its use." Hence, learners are presented with connected discourse in the form of "whole" or complete texts that serve as functional units for making sense of language.

Foreign language (FL) learning involves understanding messages created for members of a different language community, a world with values and cultural assumptions outside the FL learners' frame of reference. Therefore, language presented in its authentic or "whole" context can expose FL learners to themes from the target culture that are functional, interesting, and relevant. In most American communities, foreign language learning is not viewed as a necessity, nor is a foreign language easily available in an authentic context.

Hence, we, the teachers of foreign languages, have the charge to create classroom environments filled with "whole" texts related to themes from the target culture.

Whole language programs present language in the context of real situations that confront learners with problem-solving opportunities that promote risk-taking and allow for the possible commission of errors. Such behavior is likely to occur when FL learners use higher-level skills or top-down strategies to communicate with texts before they attend to the discrete language structures that require a more bottom-up approach. The advantage of utilizing whole texts in the FL classroom is that grammar emerges naturally and provides students opportunities to focus on accuracy within the context of meaningful discourse. Adair-Hauck, Donato, and Cumo (1994) suggest a cyclical approach to improving accuracy that operates within a whole language framework. They suggest that the cycle should begin with the text as a meaningful entity that foreshadows the grammatical structure. The second phase of the cycle requires that the learner interact with the text in a participatory manner to increase comprehension, and then the learner's attention is focused on form. Finally, the learner is directed, through extension activities, to use the form in another modality. We propose music with its accompanying lyrics as an excellent source for this whole language approach to grammar instruction.

Whole Language and Thematic Units

What Goodman and others propose as a whole language approach is consistent with Krashen's (1982) suggestion that the main function of the classroom is to provide comprehensible input for L2 learners who do not have the opportunity to acquire language in the informal environment of the target culture. Learners require input that is (a) comprehensible, (b) interesting and relevant, (c) not grammatically sequenced, and (d) in sufficient quantity to supply ***i* + 1**, or input that is one level above the learner's level of current competence. Textbook units that follow a topical syllabus can present a variety of opportunities for teachers to create a thematic approach to language teaching. For example, a topic that is common to many beginning FL textbooks concerns favorite activities. A variety of texts can be collected including songs that deal with likes and dislikes. These lyrics can provide additional whole texts that reinforce forms, such as "I like," "I prefer," and "I want," within an appealing FL context. For more advanced levels, teachers can prepare original units with a variety of L2 texts related to a specific theme and thereby create a reflection of the target culture in the FL classroom.

Themes should be chosen for their relevance, importance, and interest to the students. For example, thematic units such as *Hispanic Immigration to the New World* or *Images of Paris* might be interesting and relevant to students at different levels of the curriculum. The individual texts of the unit might pertain to different content areas such as history, geography, art, and literature, or they may create images such as the sights, sounds, tastes, and holidays of a particular region. The input should vary to appeal to more than one sense. Written and oral texts that are both formal and informal give FL students an opportunity to interact more fully with meaningful language. Within this thematic framework teachers should include objects to taste, touch, and see as well as music to enjoy. The variety of input is limited only by the teacher's expertise and imagination. Input may be in the form of stories, folktales, demonstrations of real-life tasks, TPR experiences, informational articles or documents, art displays, or musical selections. Within the context of meaningful texts and appropriate activities, the students can experience the target culture and share both aesthetically and emotionally in a different cultural perspective.

The "bits and pieces" of language—the vocabulary, morphemes, syntax, phonemes, and graphemes—are still there; they are the building blocks of texts. The teacher's task is to develop interesting problem-solving activities that give students opportunities to negotiate meaning from texts and to interact with others in the process. Attention can thus be focused on form, and accuracy can develop through extended use of these structures in a variety of individual and group tasks.

The Place of Music in a Thematic, Whole Language Unit

Music is a universal language that requires an emotional response from its listeners. Listeners may love or hate what they hear. They may feel sad, happy, melancholic, or nostalgic. They may react with a range of emotional responses, but they always react. With the addition of words, the lyricist adds another dimension to the communicative value of music. The writer can tell a story, give an historical perspective, or describe a lost love, all within a poetic context that serves as a reflection of the target culture.

A variety of musical forms are appropriate for classroom activities such as classical, folk, and popular songs.[1] Purcell (1992: 195) describes folk songs as "the traditional songs that have emerged from the culture and continue to be sung generation after generation, often to mark special occasions like birthdays or holidays." Griffin (1977: 942) defines them as "musical expressions of deep culture." Popular songs, on the other hand, have been written to be performed for the general public and to be disseminated through "musical scores, live performances or recordings" (Purcell 1992: 195). With the passage of time, popular songs may come to represent a period of time, a melody, or a theme that the culture values.

The advantage of including songs in thematic, whole language units is their versatility in terms of the number of purposes they can fulfill. As linguistically authentic and culturally reliable texts, the lyrics of songs provide the teacher with opportunities to create activities with a wide range of objectives. These can be subsumed under the following goals:

- to create a mood,
- to improve listening and reading comprehension,
- to correct common pronunciation problems,
- to increase accuracy,
- to build vocabulary and provide opportunities to speak,
- to create an awareness of themes and issues that are valued by the target culture.

For example, in a thematic unit dealing with the cultural history of French Canadians, a song such as Edith Butler's "J'ai jeté à la rivière" ("I Threw into the River") can be used to heighten understanding of ethnic tensions which exist today in certain segments of Canada, while affording students an aesthetically enjoyable musical experience along with the opportunity to explore a poetic text.

Strategies for Teaching FL Songs as Culture

Sample Thematic Unit: Relations of French and English in Canada

While the following discussion focuses on the use of a specific French Canadian song, it proposes a variety of pedagogical techniques which may be applied to teaching other FL songs in a cultural context. Because "J'ai jeté à la rivière" speaks of the resentments currently harbored by some descendants of French Acadians who, in the eighteenth century, were persecuted by the English and expelled from Acadia (present-day Nova Scotia and part of New Brunswick), it provides an authentic cultural document about both historical and contemporary relations of the French and English in Canada. Furthermore, the song reduces broad historical and cultural issues to the scope of one person's feelings and gives an individual response to ethnic hatred. While acknowledging the cruel past treatment of the Acadians, Butler sings, in the best pacifist tradition, about love and forgiveness. The song's lyrics are cited below, both in the original French rhymed quatrains and in an English prose translation.

J'ai jeté à la rivière *Tous les canons de la guerre* *Car l'amour est bien plus fort* *Que les canons de la mort.*	I have thrown all the weapons of war into the river because love is far stronger than deadly guns.
Moi qui suis d'un pays *Qui fut brimé, qui fut trahi* *Moi qui suis d'un pays* *Qui ne connaît point l'oubli.*	Although I, myself, come from a country that was persecuted and betrayed, and my own people never forgive or forget.
J'ai jeté à la rivière ... (refrain)	I have thrown all the weapons ...
A relire notre histoire *Pleine de tourments et de peines* *A relire notre histoire* *Qui ne connaît pas la haine?*	Isn't it natural for anyone who reads about our troubled past to feel hatred?
J'ai jeté à la rivière ... (refrain)	I have thrown all the weapons ...
Après autant de silence *De désespoir et d'absence* *Après autant de silence* *Qui peut rêver de vengeance?*	But after so many years of silence, despair and exile, how can anyone still dream of revenge?
J'ai jeté à la rivière ... (refrain)	I have thrown all the weapons ...
Malgré le vent qui mord *Et les chiens affamés* *Malgré le vent qui mord* *Et les loups de tous côtés.*	Despite the cold biting wind and hungry dogs and the wolves all around me.
J'ai jeté à la rivière ... (refrain)	I have thrown all the weapons ...

("L'Acadie, l'Acadie," Columbia FS 96156)

The following strategies are intended to be used to teach this song in an intermediate-level French class (Level III high school or third-semester college) within the context of a thematic unit dealing with francophone Canada. These strategies approach the song holistically, that is, they are more concerned with an overall appreciation of the song as a conveyer of cultural themes than they are with teaching vocabulary or grammatical structures. While descriptions are given here in English, it is understood that all classroom activities are conducted in French.

1. **Pre-listening activities**. Students read and discuss a short text that familiarizes them with the history of Acadia, the expulsion of the Acadians, and the link between Louisiana "Cajuns" and expatriated French "Acadians." Students are asked if they are familiar with other aspects of French Canada (one can anticipate some degree of general knowledge about Quebec) and are given a brief overview of the French Canadian separatist movement and the existence of French and English ethnic tensions.

2. **First audition**. The song is then introduced as an Acadian song and, not yet having seen the lyrics, students are asked simply to listen to the music —not to be concerned about the lyrics—then to give their emotional response to the song. To facilitate self-expression in L2 the teacher may need to ask leading questions such as: "Is it a happy or a sad song? Is it a fast or slow song? Does the song make you want to dance? Do you like the singer's voice?" In eliciting responses, the teacher should take care not to be judgmental about the answers given, as the goal is to help students establish an emotional connection with the music. As performed by Edith Butler, "J'ai jeté à la rivière" is a slow, somewhat plaintive song written in a minor key and sung in a rich contralto register.

3. **Second audition**. Still not yet having seen the lyrics, students are assigned to small groups and given a listening comprehension task. The groups are told to listen to the song again, this time focusing on the lyrics, and each group makes its own list of words and phrases in the song that its members are able to understand. The teacher should then confirm what students think they have heard in the song and establish a composite listing of key words and phrases supplied by the various groups.

4. **Hypothesizing**. Using the above list of words, students are then asked to conjecture what the song may be about. The teacher may once again have to ask some leading questions intended to help students form hypotheses, which can later be re-evaluated once students have learned more about the song: "Is this a war song? A love song? A song about throwing guns into the water? A song about history?"

5. **Silent reading of the lyrics**. Students are then given a transcription of the lyrics in French, with no vocabulary glosses. They are directed to read

the text silently, then to respond orally to a series of short questions intended to help clarify the overall form of the text: "Are these lyrics in prose or in verse? Is the song divided into paragraphs or stanzas? How many stanzas are there in the song? Are all the stanzas different? Which one is repeated? How many times?"

6. **Global interpretation activity**. Working in small groups, students are asked to decide whether, according to the lyrics of the song, certain global statements are true or false, for example: "Edith Butler is probably a pacifist, that is, she thinks that peace is better than war and that love is better than hate." Groups are told to underline phrases in the lyrics that prove or disprove the global statements given above. The teacher then confirms the appropriateness of examples chosen by the various groups.

7. **Third audition**. Students re-read the lyrics while listening to the song. They are directed to pay attention to how the singer pronounces her words, and to circle five or more different words and phrases which they think are particularly important in the song. Following this activity the teacher may want to establish a composite list of key phrases. At this point one can anticipate some questions about unknown words and grammatical structures. Such questions are best answered succinctly, and whenever possible, in a manner that calls for cognitive processing. For example, if a student asks the meaning of *fut* (the literary past of the verb *être* "to be"), rather than give an extended grammatical explanation, it is preferable to state the answer in terms of an analogy: "*est* is to *fut* as present is to past." The pedagogical objective is to assure that the global messages of the song are communicated, not that each specific word and structure is understood in minute detail.

8. **Guided close reading**. Unlike intensive reading exercises that aim at close reading for the purpose of linguistic structural analyses, this activity is intended to help the student see how the song reflects cultural themes being studied in the unit. In this particular song, the even numbered quatrains

   - allude to the English persecution of Acadians and how unforgiving some Acadian descendants are (Stanza 2);
   - comment on the history of Acadians and how it provokes understandable resentment (Stanza 4);

- call for descendants of Acadians to recognize that they have suffered long enough and ought to forget about seeking revenge (Stanza 6).
- affirm the singer's determination not to succumb to all the negative forces around her that would like to incite hatred (Stanza 8), because she feels that it is better to give love than to seek revenge

Students are asked to make analogies between what is said in the song and what they have read during the pre-listening phase of the unit about the history of Acadia the persecution of Acadians

9 **Re-evaluation of hypotheses and interpretation** This is a small group activity in which students are told to reconsider the hypotheses they developed earlier in the lesson (Activity 4, above) in the light of their current understanding of the song They are then to develop a short written statement that gives the group's interpretation of what the song is about While students are formulating their statement of interpretation, it may be helpful for the teacher to help them distinguish between whether key phrases in the song have literal or figurative (metaphoric) meanings For example, are statements such as "I have thrown all the weapons of war into the river" and "I come from a country that was persecuted" meant literally or figuratively?

10 **Writing exercise** As a follow-up activity, students are given a homework assignment to write a short composition that summarizes and comments on the song

Such an holistic approach to the teaching of a FL song not only engages the students' emotional response to the music, it also helps improve their listening comprehension as well as their reading, speaking, and writing skills while working within the meaningful context of an authentic cultural document Furthermore, it fosters heightened awareness and fuller understanding of themes and issues which reflect significant issues in the target culture

Sample Thematic Unit: Hispanic Immigration to the New World

This unit for intermediate students (Level IV of high school Spanish or third-semester college Spanish) includes strategies for both teaching grammar and identifying stereotypes within a whole language approach The primary goals are to reintroduce the geography of Spain and past narration within the global theme of immigration. The unit's objectives state that students will be able to

- locate Galicia and Andalucía on a map of Spain and tell something of interest about both areas.
- appreciate immigration as a universal phenomenon that crosses cultures and centuries.
- use new vocabulary to speak and write about the themes and imagery presented in the musical selections, and
- narrate in the past time frame.

The teacher should choose introductory texts, such as clips from videos that present images of Galicia and Andalucía, and then give additional information with maps, posters, slides, and realia. Although the unit is described here in English, it is understood that all classroom activities are conducted in Spanish.

"El abuelo"[2] by Alberto Cortez is the first song presented to the students. The lyrics tell the story of a young man, seemingly without the means to improve his lot in Spain, who decides to forsake his home and family in Galicia for a fresh start in a new land. The New World is good to him: he farms the land, has a family, and prospers. However, as many immigrants before and after him, he never forgets the sights and sounds of his origins. He conveys this love for his homeland to his grandson who, upon his grandfather's death, returns to Galicia to visit the villages, walk the paths, and listen to the legends of his grandfather's youth.

1. **Pre-listening activities:** Students look at photos of poor farmers that include at least one photo of a farmer pushing a hand plow through the fields of Galicia. Encourage students then to recall the previous discussion about Galicia, its terrain, and its legends. This review should lead to a discussion about immigration in general and the feelings of immigrants as they live out their lives in a strange land.

2. **Listening activities:** First, the students listen to the song and contemplate the lyrics with specific questions in mind, such as "Is this song telling a story? If so, who is it about? What did he do? How does he feel—happy, sad, or both? Why does the song begin with the sounds of bagpipes? Why does the tempo keep alternating?" After this first listening activity, students contribute their ideas as the teacher compiles a list of their

answers on the board for future reference. Next, the teacher distributes a cloze exercise with the lyrics to the song from which the verbs have been removed and placed in an alphabetized word bank above the exercise. The students may have to listen to the song two or three times before they can successfully fill in all the blanks. Then, they check their completed version against a transparency of the correct lyrics provided by the teacher.

3. **Silent reading of the lyrics:** The teacher directs the students to read their corrected lyrics in Spanish, without a dictionary, to get the gist of the story. Then, with the teacher's help, they either confirm or discard some of their previous ideas listed on the board.

4. **Intensive reading activities:** The students now have a general idea as to the theme and content of the song. Next, they turn their attention to form with an intensive reading activity that focuses the narration. First, a synonym search helps the students to decode the words in the lyrics that are difficult for intermediate readers. For example, *lejos de* is indicated on their activity sheet along with the strophe and line where the singer uses the word *allende*.

[*e* = *estrofa* (strophe), *r* = *renglón* (line)]
e 1 *r* 5 *lejos de* = ______________________________
(e 1 r 5 far from = ______________________________)

This activity requires students to engage in problem-solving rather than to depend on English glosses or teacher explanations for decoding unknown words. The second activity requires students to find proof in the song that a list of sentences is true. Together these sentences make up a summary of the song written in simpler L2 than that used by the singer. For example, the students read the following sentence in Spanish and then find the numbers of the strophe and line that prove the truth of the statement.

e __ *r* __ *Un dia, un joven gallego tomó la decisión de empezar una nueva vida.*
(e __ r __ One day a young Galician decided to begin a new life.)

The students would likely choose the following line:

e __ *r* __ *y el viento le dijo: construye tu vida detrás de los mares, allende Galicia.*
(e __ r __ and the wind told him: make your life behind the sea, far from Galicia.)

The students are reintroduced to the text in order to better understand the song and to be prepared for the following narration activity.

5. **Writing activity:** Students listen to the song again, paying close attention to the story line, while the teacher distributes directions for the writing activity. The teacher explains that after completing the following exercise, the students will present a short narration about the grandfather's life in their own words to the class. The directions for the activity instruct them to write at least five actions of the grandfather that are stated or implied by the singer. Since this is a structured activity, they are reminded that these sentences should use the preterite. They also are instructed to write five descriptions related to the grandfather and his grandson that are stated or implied by the singer. This time, they are reminded that their descriptions should use the imperfect. Students peer edit their sentences before creating their versions of the story to present to the class. They may work in groups to present their stories as a pantomime activity in which one person reads and the others act out the story.

6. **Discussion activity:** Students are assigned to small groups of three or four and given specific questions to encourage a discussion on the universality of the theme and its relationship to the problems of immigration today. Some of the questions created for the students should also challenge them to interpret the figurative language of the song. After a specified period of time, students report back for a class discussion of their ideas.

A song with a decidedly different flavor, "La otra España"[4] by Mocedades, is the other text in this unit. The lyrics paint a picture of a different sort of man to arrive in the New World, one who easily exchanges one lifestyle for another. This time the young man is a "don Juan" clad in the typical broad- brimmed hat of Andalucía with a carnation in his lapel as he takes off for the New World without even a farewell to the young lady waiting on her balcony for him to return. The "Other Spain" is portrayed as a place that smells of sugar cane, tobacco, and tar and is inhabited by lazy dark-skinned people. In this "Other Spain" he exchanges his cape and guitar for the poncho and the *charango* of the New World. The song provides some stereotypical images of Andalucía and the New World as well as some obvious inconsistencies.

1. **Pre-listening activities:** The teacher puts up several posters or pictures with images that are presented in the song, such as whitewashed houses with balconies and flowers, and fields of sugar cane or tobacco. After having seen pictures and videos of Andalucia in the introductory phase of the unit, students can relate these images to their probable locations in either Andalucia or the New World.

2. **Listening activities:** Before listening to the song, the students receive a chart with two columns headed, **Andalucía** and **The Other Spain**. Then, without the lyrics, they listen for the words that they think convey images of either place and write them in the appropriate column. Afterwards, the students listen several more times to complete a cloze activity, again with an alphabetized word bank provided. With the corrected lyrics in hand, the students compare their lists of images with those in the written lyrics and decide if they have attributed them to the most probable locale. They also hypothesize as to where the man may have gone in the New World—to the Caribbean Islands, to Mexico—and suggest reasons for their choice.

3. **A guided reading with interpretation activities:** The problem-solving activities for this song require students to find in the lyrics the items designated as Spanish and those identified as belonging to the New World. In the follow-up discussion they will look at these distinctions more carefully. Next, students find proof in the lyrics to support several hypotheses concerning the young man in the song. He is probably (a) an adventurer, (b) an opportunist, and/or (c) a womanizer. They are also asked to decide if the song provokes stereotypes. For example, after listening to this song do they get the idea that generally that (a) young men from Andalucia are womanizers, (b) people in Latin America are lazy, (c) people in Latin America wear ponchos, etc. In the following class discussion, the teacher helps students clarify some ideas about stereotyping and overgeneralization. For example, are the distinctions between Spain and the New World as clear cut as the song makes them appear? Is the poncho a common article of clothing in all of Latin America? Are all people in Latin America lazy?

4. **Speaking activity**: Students create a narration in the past concerning this young man and the girl he left crying on the balcony. Since these lyrics attempt to capture images more than to tell a story, this activity will require students to create an original story in which they can infer whatever they

like to make the narrative more interesting. This can be a chain story if the teacher prefers.

5. **Synthesis activity**: The students can choose a theme related to any of the ideas presented in the unit, such as "Andalucia," *el inmigrante* (the immigrant), or *un aventurero* (an adventurer) to write a poem, either of their own design or according to a formula, such as a cinquain. (For a description of cinquain poetry, see Omaggio Hadley 1993: 301-02.)

Conclusion

One of the greatest advantages of integrating music in a whole language instructional unit is its flexibility and scope as an educational resource: it can be used effectively in a wide variety of ways ranging from a simple background of authentic sounds— a sort of *fond sonore* or musical underscoring for another classroom activity—to the central focus or organizing principle of a lesson or of an entire unit, serving as the primary vehicle for teaching language and culture. Most significantly, FL songs can be incorporated at every level of the curriculum to help students improve their proficiency in all four language skills, enhance affectivity, and enrich awareness of the foreign culture.

Notes

[1] For further readings on popular music in the foreign language classroom see v. L. Hamblin, "Integrating Popular Songs Into the Curriculum," *The French Review* 60, 4 (1987): 479-84; Frank Nuessel and Caterina Cicogna, "The Integration of Songs and Music into the Italian Curriculum," *Italica* 68: 473-86; Anne Urbancic and Jana Vizmuller, "Using Popular Music in the Foreign Language Classroom," *Canadian Modern Language Review* 38,1 (1981): 81-87; Bruce Dean Willis and Keith Mason, "Canciónes en la clase: The Why and How of Integrating Songs in Spanish by English-speaking and Bilingual Artists," *Hispania* 77,1 (1994): 102-09.

[2] Cortez, Alberto. "El abuelo." *Alberto Cortez de Colección*. Buenos Aires: Polygram Discos, S.A. 1994.

[3] Mocedades. "La otra España." *Mocedades: La otra España*. Madrid: Serdisco, S.A. 1984.

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3

Language Maintenance: Bridging the Gaps in Foreign Language Education

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All foreign language educators have faced second language attrition (SLAT) in some fashion, whether it be in their own language learning experience or through students enrolled in their class after an absence from language instruction. Nevertheless, although second language attrition has been recognized as a credible field of investigation within the broader parameters of the study of second language acquisition (SLA), comparatively little research has been done concerning this ubiquitous problem. Consequently, the extent and nature of second language attrition still remain elusive (Freed 1980, Lambert and Freed 1982). What has received general acknowledgment, however, is that unpracticed second language (L2) skills tend to erode over time (Lambert and Freed 1982, Weltens 1987). The extent and nature of FL attrition and what factors play a role in determining or mitigating loss of L2 skills are not yet well-understood (Freed 1980, Lambert and Freed 1982). Nevertheless, determining how and why learned foreign language skills diminish and what factors—individual or language-specific—are related to skill loss is necessary for developing effective maintenance training. This paper will review second language attrition research, underscoring those factors that appear to have an impact on language loss. Of the few studies that exist, the majority concern second language acquisition in a naturalistic setting.[1] Research is needed in the area of foreign language acquisition and, consequently, attrition in a formal or tutored setting as well.[2] In addition, a variety of suggestions will be offered for capitalizing on language learned in a classroom setting and for combating language attrition or at least minimizing its effect as much as possible.

SLAT Research

The emergence of second language attrition as a credible field of investigation took place in 1980 at the University of Pennsylvania with the first conference ever held on the theme (cf. Lambert and Freed 1982). Since 1980, a few individual journal issues have been dedicated to attrition (for example, *Applied Psycholinguistics* 1986 7, 3; *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 1989 11, 2). In the past several years researchers have focused more on the study of attrition, albeit with divergent emphases: aphasia, language loss in the elderly, and L2 loss in naturalistic settings.[3] The extant data base for second language attrition in a formal/tutored setting, however, is still quite small.

Numerous problems confront research on second language attrition. Longitudinal studies are needed, but such research is time-consuming, labor intensive, and costly. In addition, it is difficult to isolate and/or agree upon confounding variables that may affect results, such as predictor variables (e.g., motivation and aptitude) and criterion variables (e.g., measurement issues). What is needed is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in order to determine not just *what* is happening, but learners' perceptions of *how* and *why* it is happening. Frequently, researchers tend to use second language acquisition as a reference point from which to investigate second language attrition. The lack of definitive answers in SLA research makes this approach somewhat tenuous at best.

Reviews of the available research (Lambert and Freed 1982; Oxford 1982; Weltens 1986; Reilly 1988; Vechter, Lapkin, and Argue 1990) suggest that many of the factors contributing to second language acquisition also appear to be factors in second language attrition. For example, language loss can be attributed to psychological factors (memory, intelligence, cognitive abilities), socio-psychological factors (attitudes, motivation), linguistic and psycholinguistic factors (such as the learner's perception of the difference in linguistic difficulty between the first language and the L2). In addition, age, maturity, and the learning strategies and styles of students can play a role. Instructional factors encompass the setting (classroom/tutored, naturalistic), methodological and instructional approaches, and skill area emphases.

Another important factor that bears investigation in second language attrition research is the effect of the incubation period.[4] Recent research has begun to offer insights into second language attrition vis-à-vis the length of the incubation period and the learner's attained proficiency level at its onset. Particularly germane to maintenance issues are studies of the possible effects that learners' exposure to and use of the L2 during the incubation period might have.

Instructional Practices

Clearly, empirical support for singular teaching or learning practices that appear to circumvent or diminish language attrition would provide some unifying direction for classroom instruction. No evidence to date, however, indicates that one method is superior to another in terms of the long-term retention of acquired skills. Research seems to suggest, however, that when learning is personalized and contextualized, it is meaningful to the learner (Omaggio-Hadley 1993). Educational psychologists theorize that meaningful learning is retained most efficiently and effectively by the learner (Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian 1968). Leading foreign language researchers and pedagogues also tend to support the notion that socialization in language learning fosters meaningful learning (Kramsch 1987; Rivers 1986; Savignon 1987; Spolsky 1989). Such socialization can be encouraged through interactive and communicative activities in which students participate. Language loss, then, may be mitigated because the learner is involved in language tasks that are both personally and contextually meaningful and therefore more conducive to retention. Such tasks are communicative and interactive in nature and are carried out in an atmosphere in which the learner is comfortable and confident. This expanded role of classroom discourse has been suggested as an aid to developing greater proficiency in the language (Genesee 1987), a factor that may have a direct impact on second language attrition.

Both foreign language learners and educators also need to have realistic expectations vis-à-vis foreign language learning (Omaggio Hadley 1993). Learning a second language is a long-term process; the idea that learners can achieve advanced levels of proficiency by the end of two or three years of classroom instruction in high school or college is a persistent myth that needs to be dispelled. Students (and their parents) will continue to accept this myth and be misled if not presented with realistic goals that ensure a good understanding of the time and work commitment involved in foreign language learning.

Skills and Strategies

In terms of particular language skills, it has been suggested that language attrition occurs differentially across skill areas (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). These primary language skills seemingly decline at different rates and in different ways (Gardner et al. 1987, Godsall-Myers 1985). Some studies have posited that general skills and strategies are not as vulnerable to attrition as are specific skills (Moorcroft and Gardner 1987, Weltens, de Bot, and Van Els 1986). General skills and strategies include global language skills, top-down processing (such as getting the "gist" in reading/listening), negotiating meaning in conversations, deriving meaning from a context or situation, sociolinguistic skills (such as comprehending and utilizing facial expressions and body language), and metalinguistic activities (such as analyzing the interrelationship between language and cultural behavior phenomena). Specific skills, in addition to the four major skills, include dealing with "fine" points and mechanics of language learning, verb conjugations, vocabulary, noun/adjective agreement, and word order.

The overall indication from research is that, when unpracticed, the productive skills (writing/speaking) seem to be more vulnerable to attrition than the receptive skills (listening/reading). Several researchers found that neither listening nor reading was affected significantly by an incubation period of summer vacation (Pratella 1969, Robison 1985, Smythe et al. 1973). Some studies have even shown improvement in listening after an incubation period (Cohen 1975). Other studies have suggested the attrition of the productive skill of speaking, especially in the area of lexical loss. In these studies, inadequate vocabulary caused the learners to use other strategies to express themselves. They tended to paraphrase, circumlocute, and finally code-switch when faced with missing vocabulary (Cohen 1974, 1975, Olshtain 1986). Real-life L2 usage frequently requires the speaker to communicate a message for which the precise words are not in his or her lexicon. Teachers often structure information gap activities in classroom instruction to give students practice in getting their point across, despite a lack of exact words to express their ideas. Paraphrasing and circumlocuting, then, appear to be beneficial skills to teach students. While learners may be frustrated at first by their lack of vocabulary, they will grow in confidence as they discover they can, in fact, make themselves understood by using these alternative strategies.

Language Learned vs. Language Forgotten

How much language has truly been learned will have a bearing on how much attrition takes place. Bahrick (1984a, 1984b), in a far-reaching study of foreign language learners with varying levels of proficiency and length of incubation periods (up to 50 years or more), found that the higher the level of proficiency, the higher the degree of "learned" language and the greater the immunity to attrition loss. It is important to note here that this study focused on discrete point items. Other researchers, professing a more global and holistic stance in view of language proficiency, have posited a "critical threshold" (Neisser 1984; Pan and Berko-Gleason 1986) of acquired language that provides a relative immunity to second language attrition. Memory curves and the psychological notion of forgetting enter in here also (cf. Ebbinghaus 1913). Indeed, Bahrick found results that suggested "memory curves which decline exponentially for the first three to six years of the retention interval. After that, retention remains unchanged for periods of up to thirty years before showing a final decline" (p. 1). Other researchers have found evidence of a plateau before the precipitous forgetting curve (Edwards 1976; Weltens, de Bot, and Van Els 1986). Taken together, the issues of proficiency level and the forgetting phenomenon suggest that the question for foreign language educators might not be so much concentrating on what learners might forget but rather how to increase the amount of material learners actually learn in the first place.

Regression theory, which states that attrition is the mirror image of acquisition, is another possible explanation of the process of language loss. That is, second language attrition is governed by a "last learned-first lost" rule (Cohen 1975). However, second language acquisition research has yet to provide across-the-board agreement on and an empirical basis for the order of acquisition. Thus, the focus for creating effective maintenance training becomes one of concentrating on areas for which there *is* research evidence.

Research suggests that some elements or rules in foreign language learning may be less susceptible to attrition than others. For example, idioms and idiomatic expressions, social fillers, and other similar formulaic expressions appear more stable over time and do not seem to be lost at the same rate as other elements (Weltens, de Bot, and Van Els 1986). One explanation for this phenomenon may be that these particular elements are more emphasized and are therefore over-learned by students.

The first of Andersen's (1982) linguistic features hypotheses suggests that less "functional" or "frequent" linguistic elements are more vulnerable to attrition. Marked forms are also more vulnerable to loss.[5] In support of this hypothesis, Cohen (1975) found that, in a study of irregular verbs, the tendency was to revert to a regularization of form (e.g., *went > goed, ate > eated*). Marked forms with a high functional load are presumably less affected. The second hypothesis states that L2/FL areas that contrast with the L1 are more vulnerable than linguistic elements similar in the two languages. Olshtain (1986) investigated typological differences in phrasal verbs between English and Hebrew and found that where the principal meaning of the verb was signaled by a particle (e.g., get *up, down, through, over*)—which does not occur in Hebrew—L2 learners experienced noticeably more language loss.

In general, second language acquisition research suggests that foreign language learners tend to retain those elements that are useful in performing tasks they are called upon to complete (Clark and Jordan 1984, Cziko, Lambert, Sidoti, and Tucker 1980). If foreign language educators structure lessons that provide learners with opportunities to "use" the language in a meaningful way, the learning potential of those elements necessary to carry out those activities is greatly increased. Irrespective of the perceived difficulty of the L2 elements involved, if they are shown to be meaningful and necessary to learners for a variety of reasons, the attrition rate of said elements may decrease greatly. In short, the scenario of "last learned-first lost," will be replaced by "most used, best learned, last lost."

In summary, L2 attrition research suggests that no single instructional method outdistances any other in terms of preventing language loss. Instructional practices that focus on meaningful learning seem to provide optimal conditions for L2 acquisition. The more of a second language students learn, the less they tend to forget (i.e., the higher the L2 proficiency, the lower the attrition). Linguistic items that are similar in both the L1 and L2 appear to reinforce each other and are not so easily lost as those elements that are more linguistically different. Overall, language forms that are unmarked or linguistically "simpler" and those that appear frequently in language use are also good targets for concentrated instruction as they do not disappear so readily as more obscure or linguistically complex terms. Nevertheless, usable language elements, irrespective of difficulty—perceived or linguistic—appear to remain with the learner longer because they are practical and necessary to self-expression. Depending on educational goals and learner needs, classroom instruction should target those elements of language that will be most useful to the learners, thus ensuring longer retention.

Considerations and Suggestions for Implementing Maintenance-oriented Strategies

Three time frames need to be taken into account when addressing language maintenance strategies in an instructional setting:

1. the instructional period
2. the post-incubation period
3. the incubation period itself.

The instructional period refers to any time frame during which the learner is actively engaged in foreign language learning through formal instruction or tutoring. Students are typically enrolled in year-long language courses at the secondary level or in sequential semester or quarter courses during an academic year at a tertiary institution. This period supposes continuity in language study and no extended break from language instruction other than that normally occurring between the time blocks mentioned above. Suggestions under this subheading are made in an attempt to minimize the second language attrition that seems to occur once the learners cease their formal language study.

The post-incubation period signifies the return to formal language study after a certain hiatus, caused by a natural break such as summer vacation or by postponement of sequential and continuous language study for any number of reasons. Often students study a foreign language in secondary schools but fail to continue directly once they go to college. Eventually they return to formal language study, frequently because of a language requirement for graduation. By this time, the students have not studied a foreign language for two years or more, and the effects of language attrition are much in evidence. Suggestions and strategies in this section are directed toward curbing the language attrition that is most likely in progress and capitalizing on the L2 acquisition that did take place during prior formal language instruction.

Finally, maintenance activities are offered for use during the incubation period in an attempt to circumvent as much language attrition as possible by continued language use outside the arena of a formal instructional setting. The activities are designed to engage students' interests and special abilities and talents, as well as to motivate them to continue foreign language learning on their own or with their friends, and with less intervention and guidance by the teacher than would normally occur in the classroom.

The Instructional Period

Review/Refresher Courses

Mini-reviews can be set up to take place periodically during the instructional period, e.g., at the beginning of each new term/quarter/semester. The reacquisition of L2 skills appears to be facilitated using materials familiar to the learner (Clark and Jordan 1984). Hence, recombining previously learned vocabulary, grammar, and culture and inserting them into new contexts based on listening and reading activities that accommodate students' interests and needs would increase the likelihood of reactivating these skills.

Another area of concentration of a refresher/review course might be items that were not well-learned originally or that typically present problems for learners. Definite articles, interrogatives, object pronouns, possessive and demonstrative pronouns, and past tense forms are some that fall into this category (Robison 1985). Data culled from diagnostic tests given throughout the instructional period can be quite useful to teachers in pinpointing and then addressing students' areas of language weakness. A careful analysis of final exams can also provide valuable information to be considered in planning the objectives of subsequent language courses for those students continuing in a language sequence.

A third focus is to consider and work with linguistic elements in which vulnerability to attrition is high. Items that are very complex, have multiple forms, or present sharp contrasts to L1 equivalents would be logical inclusions here. One example of a linguistic item that could be targeted are possessive adjectives, which have different forms for number and gender in some languages (e.g., French: *son sa ses*, Italian: *il mio la mia, i miei le mie*, Spanish: *nuestro,-a nuestros,-as*). Another example might be the declension of nouns in German (e.g., *der den dem des Apfel[s]*). Complex grammatical elements, such as the formation and uses of the present and past subjunctive in Spanish or the difference in use of *qu'est-ce qui* and *qu'est-ce que* in French, could be emphasized. Elements contrasting strongly with L1 equivalents are especially susceptible to attrition and need to be stressed. One example is that of a perfect tense being regularly used for expression of preterite actions in lieu of the simple past (e.g., I read > French: *j'ai lu*, Italian: *ho letto*). Another example might be inclusive verbs that are phrasal or carry a particle in the L1 but include the latter in the L2 verb (e.g., French: *écouter* > to listen to, German: *zerfallen* > to fall apart, Italian: *aspettare* > to wait for, Spanish: *buscar* > to look for).

FLES Programs

Increasing the length of exposure to the target language is essential in attempting to increase the amount of learning and retention taking place (Pratella 1969), and some research has evidenced a significantly higher rate of learning and retention in FLES learners than in those learners who began language study at a later age (Robison 1985). The rationale seems to be that "when language learning begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness" (Curtain and Pesola 1994: 3-4). A considerable amount of second language acquisition research addresses the question of age as a factor in language learning (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991), and not all of it is conclusive regarding a specific age or time period. Many additional factors (for example, learner factors—social, cultural, and psychological, or program goals—ultimate objectives of language instruction) bear on the issue. Nevertheless, the consensus appears to be "that foreign language programmes should be begun in elementary school ... [always allowing] the child time to establish a firm basis in the L1" (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991: 206-207).

Some investigation in a district that does not have a FLES program in place would be worthwhile. Certified elementary teachers with strong foreign language backgrounds or certified secondary language teachers with elementary credentials and experience might be found. A cooperative venture, albeit voluntary at first, might be the initial step in creating interest in such a program among students and parents, leading to its installation as a regular curricular offering in the future. If a full-blown FLES program is not feasible, another possibility is to initiate programs where secondary or tertiary foreign language students, under close supervision of certified personnel, can give target language mini-lessons to elementary students on a regular basis. This initiative will not only set the foreign language wheels in motion for the younger students, it will also reinforce L2 learning by the older students.

The Post-Incubation Period

Traditionally, after the incubation period, learners return to foreign language study without the benefit of some form of review. They are then typically subjected to review material for a prolonged period of time in an attempt to "bring them up to par." Teachers generally believe that the first several weeks of a new school term should be devoted primarily to a concentrated review of material supposedly presented during the previous school year. Often teachers feel they are just reteaching something that should have been learned before, and they feel it is not the most productive use of a rather large portion of their time.

A better understanding of what is necessary in terms of review will greatly facilitate foreign language programs. Despite widespread belief and practice, Robison (1985: 123) posits that extensive review of material taught the previous semester or school year does not seem appropriate. He suggests that because students do seem to remember what they learn, review should focus on (1) problematic items that were not well-learned initially and (2) unretained vocabulary. By identifying areas where attrition vulnerability is high, such as lexicon and items of great grammatical complexity, the foreign language educator can enhance the review with guidance and appropriate emphases.

A collaborative effort among colleagues, sharing data culled from diagnostic tests, could help pinpoint those language elements in need of additional stress and review. Teachers can apprise their colleagues in the next language course of anticipated trouble spots in specific language elements as well as any weaknesses in students' overall language skills.

Also, coordination of course content across levels of language study in terms of common topics and functions can lead to a spiraling curriculum that constantly reinforces and expands concepts the students are learning. For example, a brief review of leave-taking in a simple situation, learned during the first year of language learning, can be a lead-in activity for learning other vocabulary and language strategies to employ in a different and more complex leave-taking situation to be mastered during the second year. In this way, review is combined with new learning, and both are mutually reinforcing in terms of general strategies and concepts.

One model program in Michigan advocates a number of tactics for intensive and effective review. The basic tenets of this program are: intensive foreign language study, a caring atmosphere, learning-by-doing use of language, review of some familiar material, and recycling of other not-so-well learned material (Loughrin-Sacco, Matthews, Sweet, and Miner 1990). The program is implemented immediately preceding the beginning of the fall semester. The students in this program meet for six hours a day, five days a week for two weeks. The student-to-teacher ratio is three to one. Part of the instruction includes two periods daily of ninety minutes each of intensive grammar review and instruction. The goals of the program are threefold: reviewing and reviving French language skills, including a large number of activities focused on "hands-on" learning that promote active language use (e.g., preparation of a French meal, from start to finish), and creating enthusiasm for French through establishing a supportive learning environment. Where logistically possible, creation of a program of this sort could provide an effective review to "jump-start" students, enabling them to perform more effectively in a new language sequence.

The Incubation Period

Research indicates that learners who are exposed to the target language during the incubation period have significantly better performance in listening, vocabulary, and writing than those who have no exposure (Robison 1985). The challenge becomes one of providing opportunities to learners for exposure to the target language during periods of non-instructional time. At the same time, an important consideration for effective maintenance is the provision for multi-skill integration, not simply a concentration in one skill area. The following are suggestions that can be entered into individually or jointly by language learners and educators.

Teacher-prepared Maintenance Programs

The relative stability of listening and reading comprehension suggests that these skills could serve as vehicles for strengthening other skill areas. Using the data collected from the diagnostic tests and course final exams to inform decisions on structures to target, topics to cover, and materials to include, teachers could prepare "summer" packages of authentic reading and listening texts, with accompanying activities, with which learners work at their own pace. A wide variety of interests and topics could be included to meet many different needs. Considering individual learner interests is important for increasing L2 comprehension in these skill areas (LeLoup 1993; Mueller 1980). Packages could be structured according to difficulty level, and various options for levels of completion could be established. The different completion levels could then be rewarded by a predetermined and graduated system (for example: completion of packet #1 entitles the student to a prize/homework points; packet #2, to quiz exemption; packet #3, to target language realia).

Clearly, the realm of options is wide and increasing every day. Within the maintenance program framework, important points to consider when creating maintenance activities include (a) the purpose of the activity, (b) the parameters to be set, (c) the time commitment the FL educator and the learners are willing to make, (d) insurance that meaningful learning takes place by utilizing individual learner interests and familiar contexts, (e) provision for multi-skill integration, and (f) inclusion of learner incentives to participate in these activities.

Pre-packaged Materials

Numerous commercially prepared packages of authentic materials are now available to learners. Independent work could be arranged for students using these materials during the incubation period. Two examples are the *Destinos* series (VanPatten, Marks, and Teschner 1991), a telecommunications course using video episodes with a *telenovela* story line and accompanying activities and exercises, and the *French in Action* series (Capretz, Abetti, and Germain 1987) which also has a video story line, ancillary materials, and a mysterious *homme en noir*. Students get caught up in the unfolding story and want to know what will happen next to the characters. Consequently, they are motivated to work through the lessons to reach the denouement of the story. Careful consideration of such materials will identify those programs that are pedagogically sound and thus desirable for student use during the incubation period.

Community Resources

Learners can be encouraged to seek out speakers of the L2 that are in the community. Benefits can range from broadened cultural exposure to arranged *intercambios*—language practice sessions where an hour of target language conversation for the student is traded for an hour of L1 conversation. Many communities have surprising numbers of native target language speakers who appear to be unknown to the learners but who live and work in local neighborhoods. For those students and teachers unable to study or travel abroad, a mini-tour of target language neighborhoods and resources could prove to be enjoyable, invaluable, and affordable (both in time and money). For example, a colleague in a Midwestern city arranged a tour of the Hispanic community in her area, complete with visits to local restaurants, grocers, business people, etc. The community was quite receptive and very willing to participate, and the students were amazed that "all that" existed right in their own back yard (Rule and Zeidner 1992). Contacting consulates, local government agencies and businesses, and nearby universities and colleges could help identify contact people and could also provide a resource for more authentic materials and cross-cultural exposure.

Correspondence

Foreign language educators can engage in all sorts of correspondence with their learners. One obvious means is letter writing. Another possibility is to use dialogue journals, with learners submitting the journal to the teacher at predetermined points throughout the incubation period. Making audio/video tapes is another means of communication between teacher and learner. Publication of a newsletter in the L2 over the summer is an enjoyable use of the target language for learners. The price of a subscription could be, for example, three self-addressed, stamped envelopes for three issues of the newsletter (Rule 1993). Students prepare the newsletter and submit it to the teacher for L2 editing, either several times during the process or in the final stage. The students could be motivated by staying in touch with their friends, showcasing their own vacation highlights, and producing tangible evidence of their target language use and progress. If portfolios are used in the language department, the newsletter would be a good contribution and example of student work.

Computer Programs

A wealth of information is available for those who have computer and e-mail access, and the possibilities are virtually endless for target language practice. Foreign language teachers and learners can communicate among themselves on a regular basis via e-mail. Electronic pen pals can be sought all around the world. In fact, this use of technology can be incorporated into the classroom during the regular school term, with international contact requirements for the adventuresome (Knight 1994, LeLoup and Ponterio 1994). Depending on the size and resources of the local community, investigation of an electronic connection to a nearby university could also provide access of numerous kinds: to the Internet, to native speakers of the target language, to other language classes. Another avenue worth investigating is that of a freenet system, giving the user access to literally a world of information and sources. Some universities in urban settings or the cities themselves (for example, Cleveland Freenet and the freenet at the State University of New York at Buffalo) provide free Internet access to the public. Freenet systems operate much like public broadcasting systems, wherein subscribers are asked to contribute monetarily what they wish if they are able. Subscribers must provide their own hardware and software for connection (a modem, and software to "talk" to the mainframe). The drawback is often limited optimal access times because of the large number of users engaging the service.

Study Tours

The ubiquitous study tour abroad is always a possibility. Several companies with long-established reputations offer many different travel options for teachers accompanying students abroad. The benefits of study and travel in a target language country are numerous. First, students witness the L2 being used as a daily means of communication by an entire community rather than a subject to be learned in the confines of a classroom. Direct exposure to the target language and culture can be a very strong motivator for students and, if they are properly and practically prepared, students' confidence in using the language will increase dramatically. Clearly, the amount of input students are exposed to by being in a target language country is much more than can ever be experienced in the classroom.

Foreign Language Projects

Foreign language learners can devise a wide variety of summer projects, such as the production of a film, writing short stories, a collaborative novel, etc. Certainly, parameters need to be established and agreed upon prior to undertaking the project, and the foreign language teacher will need to be "on call" as a resource person in many instances, but the foreign language learners can explore limitless possibilities that would engage them in target language use. Students might be motivated to engage in this type of activity by a reward system such as that discussed for completion of summer packets of materials, or they may simply want to experiment along the lines of their own interests and expertise. For instance, students with talents in photography and camera work and readily accessible camcorders may wish to produce a film. Other students with writing ability may wish to publish a monograph of target language prose and poetry.

Subscriptions

To capitalize on the reading skill, foreign language learners can be encouraged to subscribe to target language magazines, some of which are free (e.g., *Más* in hard copy or *Tecla*, an electronic weekly magazine on the Internet). In addition to pedagogically-prepared L2 publications, inquiries made to embassies and consulates can generate other reading material as well as additional possible sources of target language magazines.

Conversation Partners/Tapes

During the incubation period, foreign language learners can be paired up to engage in regular conversations that they tape and submit to their teacher at predetermined intervals. These can range from planned, scripted dialogues to spontaneous conversations based on the topic of the moment. Again, a motivational reward system could be in place and aligned with corresponding tasks. Perhaps those students who show an interest in improving their language skills through these summer activities will be considered first as possible hosts for exchange students that may come throughout the school year via organized programs in the district.

Summary and Conclusion

Second language attrition research can yield insights with far-reaching consequences for foreign language programs. Better understanding of the forgetting process and second language attrition can lead to new directions in program planning by reconsidering the extent and nature of review, by rethinking the nature and sequence of course offerings, and by providing learners with more "hands-on" experience using materials of a grounded sequential nature during both the instructional and incubation periods.

Clearly, educational goals and learner needs must guide classroom instruction. Attention to second language attrition research needs to inform the instructional plan and be factored into classroom activities. Included here is also the parallel notion of language acquisition and the suggestion that the more language one knows, the less one forgets. Although no one method has been demonstrated as superior in circumventing attrition, use of personalization and contextualization is thought to enhance language learning and, by extension, minimize language loss.

Another consideration for foreign language teachers is to target those elements of language that will be most useful to the learners, thus ensuring longer retention. Because general skills are thought to be less vulnerable to attrition, teachers should focus on instruction of such skills and strategies as top-down processing, global comprehension rather than decoding of minutia, negotiation of meaning, and circumlocution. Formulaic phrases and idiomatic expressions, as well as linguistic elements that are parallel in the L1 and L2 can also be stressed and recycled when incorporating more complex forms that are in some way related. This spiraling will aid in the assimilation of new materials while reinforcing already learned language.

Teaching practices and language maintenance strategies and activities such as those discussed in this paper, informed by language attrition research, can improve student learning and diminish language loss. In addition, if students engage in language maintenance activities during absences from formal instruction, in a sense they continue their language study in an uninterrupted fashion. Language is least vulnerable to attrition when it is in constant and purposeful use.

Notes

[1] An issue of concern here is locale: the present discussion focuses on foreign language learning in a tutored, formal, or classroom setting as opposed to a natural setting.

[2] The term *foreign language* is used to denote a language being learned that is not the language of the community in which the learner is residing. Second language (L2) is frequently used to denote the same language learning situation, as well as to refer to any language learned after the first (L1) or native language (NL). FL and L2 will be used interchangeably in this discussion.

[3] In 1986 a Language Loss Symposium was held at Rolduc Conference Center in the Netherlands, and most of the proceedings that dealt with these topics were published (cf. Weltens, de Bot, and Van Els 1986).

[4] The term "incubation period" (Gardner, Lalonde, and MacPherson 1985) will be used to connote the period of non-use a L2 learner experiences between language learning conditions. Typically this time period is anywhere from summer vacation (three months) to a hiatus period of approximately two to three years between foreign language instruction at secondary and tertiary institutions.

[5] The most general sense of markedness is evidenced by the presence versus the absence of a linguistic feature, e.g., the singular of most English nouns is unmarked and the plural is marked by the letter *s*. The notion of marking can also apply to frequency of occurrence, specificity (as in gender marking), and the distribution principle. For a succinct explanation of markedness, see Crystal 1991: 211-212.

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4

Meeting the Demands and Challenges of the Foreign Language Methodology Course

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Call for Educational Reform

Teacher education in the United States is in a state of reform. America's dissatisfaction with its system of public education has placed the schools, students, teachers, and teacher education programs at the center of the education community's debate about curricular change. The various organizations involved with teacher education called for "radical improvements," and a reeducation of the profession that emphasized the application of learning and teaching theory to "practical problems" (AACTE 1976; NCATE 1982; The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy 1986; and the Holmes Group 1986, 1990). These organizations advocated a shift in the focus of schooling "from teaching to learning, from the passive acquisition of facts and routines to the active application of ideas to problems," and stressed that teachers ought to be able to "think for themselves if they are to help others think for themselves" (The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy 1986: 18). The Holmes Group (1986: 3-4) recognized that "much is at stake, for American students' performance will not improve much if the quality of teaching is not improved. And teaching will not improve much without dramatic improvements in teacher education." Therefore, this particular organization endeavors to make the education of teachers intellectually more sound and rigorous, reiterating that teachers ought to have a greater mastery of their academic subject matter, and of the skills to teach it. The set of skills necessary to teach a particular subject matter is referred to as pedagogy. The Holmes Group (1986: 51) defines the term as follows: "[Pedagogy is] the capacity to translate personal knowledge into interpersonal knowledge used for teaching." The reeducation of teachers envisioned by the aforementioned organizations calls for a stronger pedagogical content in teacher preparation programs. In addition, they advocate closer ties between the universities and the schools in order to provide a meaningful clinical experience that is both "campus based" and "field oriented," and that is designed to connect theory and practice, knowledge and experience (AACTE 1976, The Holmes Group 1990).

At the core of the various reforms that are currently taking place are the fundamental beliefs that teaching is, above all, a profession and that teachers are professionals. As a profession, it claims the following attributes: a body of knowledge, a period of rigorous study that is formally assessed, a sense of public service, high standards of professional conduct, and the ability to perform the task of sharing with others in a demonstrably competent manner one's acquired personal knowledge.[1]

The call for reform by the education community has also been voiced by the foreign language teaching profession, which recognizes the imperative of pedagogical content in foreign language teacher preparation programs, and places a clear emphasis on the teacher "as a decision maker" (Wing 1993). Indeed, numerous articles and volumes address this issue (Alatis, Stern, and Stevens 1983; Freeman 1989; Combs 1989; Moeller 1989; Richards 1990; Richards and Nunan 1990; Jarvis and Taylor 1990; Nunan 1991; Strasheim 1991; Alatis 1991; Galloway 1991; Wallace 1991; Woodward 1991; Ely 1994, among others). Moreover, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL 1993: 220) has recently established guidelines for foreign language teacher education in which it urges programs to "provide opportunities to acquire decision-making skills related to planning, managing and evaluating instruction" as an aspect of the professional development of a teacher.[2] The language-specific professional organizations also reiterate the need for teachers to have a solid knowledge of the "art and craft of teaching," and to become "reflective teachers" (Lange 1990: 247).[3] Indeed, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP 1990: 789) echoes ACTFL's concerns when it recommends that Spanish teachers be able to "reflect" upon modern theories of second language acquisition, and make critical decisions regarding "planning for instruction, selecting materials, sequencing and executing learning activities." In a similar fashion, the American Association of Teachers of German (1993: 83) urges German teachers to broaden their professional abilities to include an awareness of the theoretical models of second language acquisition and teaching in addition to pedagogical knowledge and skills. Moreover, it states as a standard that German teachers must have "a well-articulated philosophy of teaching in which they explicate their role as educators, their responsibility toward all learners in the community, and their understanding of the teaching/learning process" (p. 89). The American Association of Teachers of French (AATF 1989, 21) recognizes that "the teacher of the 1990's must know the elements of variety and pacing and how to use a wide variety of techniques, material and technology with which to make classroom instruction interesting, meaningful, and practical." It further suggests that teachers have at their disposal a wide range of "instructional competencies" necessary to meet the needs of students of varying interests and abilities. In fact, it recommends that this information be taught in two classes of methodology "separated by a period of time during which a new teacher can put into practice the ideas and techniques learned in the first." Furthermore, all these foreign language organizations are coming together to present one coherent set of standards for accomplished teachers to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

In sum, the message of the foreign language teaching profession is very clear: pedagogical instruction must be enhanced in the "reformed" foreign language education curriculum. Indeed, there is constant pressure for professional foreign language teachers to be, in the words of Feinberg (1987: 56), "active agents in the teaching process, and not simply conduits transmitting skills, behaviors, or attitudes to a group of children through the use of prescribed materials." Properly trained foreign language teachers should be able to "evaluate and pass judgment on the transmission process." In short, it is incumbent on foreign language education programs to provide teachers with the decision-making, reflective, and evaluative skills necessary to respond to the needs of the learners of the ever-changing classrooms of the twenty-first century.

Reflective Teaching

As noted by Bartlett (1990: 202), since the early eighties a number of guidelines for redesign and reform in teacher preparation programs have been implemented. These guidelines imply a redefinition of the knowledge base, which is the essential knowledge (both theoretical and experiential) that undergirds the professional training of teachers. Attempts have been made to rearrange this knowledge base around major themes: teacher as decision-maker, teacher as researcher, teacher as critical pedagogue, teacher as developing professional, and teacher as reflective professional (Combs 1989; Freeman 1989; Lange 1990; Bartlett 1990; Wallace 1991; Woodward 1991; Wing 1993; Joiner 1993, among the most recent works). These proposals seek to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and eliminate the false dichotomy between the "what" (content) and the "how" (process). According to Woodward (1991: 4), content refers to what information, knowledge, or skills are to be taught or learned, and process refers to how this information or knowledge is going to be taught or learned. Effective teachers need to find appropriate channels or process options to deliver content to a very diverse student population. The process of looking for adequate means of content delivery and of assessing the effectiveness of these means requires a certain level of reflection. Truly effective teachers engage in reflective teaching, which is a never ending process of self-inquiry. A reflective teacher has been defined in the literature as one "who assesses the origins, purposes and consequences of his or her work at all levels."[4] In addition to these definitions, I would like to suggest that an effective teacher is one who can assess critically the effectiveness and impact of his or her teaching on the social context in which it takes place, namely a pluralistic society. The goals of foreign language teachers should be similar to those of all educators who are committed to the cause of a meaningful education for all students: to stimulate the intellectual, cognitive, and social growth of all their students; and to infuse experience and content into their subjects that empower students to pursue their self interests and create a just community where they live (Garcia 1991: 225).

In addition to these broad objectives, foreign language teachers should be concerned specifically about helping their students achieve functional ability in the foreign language and understand the culture and customs of the various groups of speakers of that language. To be reflective, foreign language teachers also ought to examine constantly both the content and the process of their instruction in light of the aforementioned goals. Reflective foreign language teachers should ask themselves the following questions:

1. Have I reached and engaged interactively *all* my students in the learning process?
2. Have I used a variety of techniques and strategies designed to address the various learning styles represented in my classroom?
3. Have I instilled in all my students an appreciation for foreign languages and cultures?

4. Have I given my students a true representation of the diversity of the "world" of the foreign language?

5. Have I given my students a functional knowledge of the foreign language (ability to speak, understand, read, and write it)?

6. Have I helped my students to become critical thinkers and independent learners?

A candid answer to these questions will subject our personal beliefs and assumptions about teaching content and practices to critical scrutiny, which, in turn, will dictate alternative courses of action. Such actions will enable us to become better teachers, able to educate truly all of the nation's children.

At this point, it is reasonable to argue that prospective teachers should acquire the skills necessary to become reflective practitioners in the course of their professional development. Wallace (1991) proposes a model for teacher development based on a reflective approach. This model comprises two basic dimensions: (1) the received knowledge, which essentially refers to the "necessary intellectual content of the profession" including relevant research findings, and (2) the experiential knowledge, which refers to knowledge gained by action and by doing (pp. 14-15). Knowledge, practice, experience, and reflection lead to professional competence.

Experiential knowledge begins with pedagogical instruction. As noted by Wing (1993: 170), "traditionally the formal development of pedagogical content began in the prospective teacher's senior year with a foreign language methods course in the college or university." Indeed, the foreign language methods course should play a critical role in the acquisition of experiential knowledge. In the following pages, I will examine the methods course for its ability to promote reflective teaching, with special focus on its experiential dimension.

The Foreign Language Methods Course

Bernhardt and Hammadou (1987: 293) remark that the methods course "is the *only* coursework many pre-service teachers have in foreign language education." Therefore the importance of this class cannot be minimized. As Wing (1993: 174) notes, "the norm in foreign language teacher-education programs in most universities is one multilanguage, multilevel methodology course taught in English and usually taken before the student teaching or internship experience." Indeed, the foreign language methods class is generally designed to prepare apprentice teachers to teach foreign languages across all levels ranging from kindergarten to high school. This basically generic course focuses on how to teach all types of languages—modern and sometimes classical—and tends to be directed in practice toward students preparing for a career at the secondary level.[5] However, the rapid growth of FLES programs throughout the country has resulted in an increase in the number of students pursuing a career in the teaching of foreign languages at the elementary school level.[6] Furthermore, the renewed interest in foreign languages has prompted teachers and prospective teachers of other disciplines to seek a second endorsement or certification to teach foreign languages, in addition to their primary fields. Additionally, graduate students pursuing an advanced degree in foreign literatures, cultures, and civilizations are also exploring the possibility of being certified to teach foreign languages in the public schools. The population of students in need of a methods course is thus very diverse. It includes prospective elementary and secondary teachers, some with teaching experience that may not always be foreign-language related. Finally, this population also includes students with varied levels of competency in the language they want to teach. The language-specific, level-specific, group-specific methodology course is not a reality in most universities (Wing 1993: 174-5). Therefore, it becomes imperative to redesign the traditional generic methods course to meet the challenges and demands created by the new clientele and to respond to the need for reform expressed by the education community. The challenge of the methods course can be summarized as follows: how to effectively equip a diverse body of neophyte foreign language teachers with the skills necessary to become reflective professional practitioners.

In spite of the important body of literature that exists in foreign language teacher education, there is a dearth of articles dealing specifically with the methods course. As Bernhardt and Hammadou (1987: 293) judiciously point out, this shortage belies its importance and the challenges that it faces. Since the publication of their report, very few articles have been published that speak directly to this issue. Bacon and Humbach (1989) describe the merits of an exchange program between the methodology instructor at the University of Cincinnati and a Spanish high school teacher. Curtain (1991) focuses her attention on foreign language methods and courses designed for the elementary school level. Similarly Mitchell and Redmond (1991) describe the curriculum of a FLES methods course, which places emphasis on integrated or content-based instruction and the principles of second language acquisition. Grosse (1991) analyzes the TESOL methods course, and in a later article, she (1993) presents the results of a study of the curricular content of the foreign language methods course. This is the only empirical study that specifically addresses the issue of the content of the methods course. Her evaluation of 159 foreign language methods course syllabi reveals that, generally speaking, this course is designed to achieve the following goals:

1. to offer developing teachers some insights into the theories of language learning;
2. to provide them with an array of the various methodologies and techniques of teaching the four skills and culture;
3. to familiarize them with the design of instructional materials;
4. to assist them in curriculum development;
5. to familiarize them with assessment techniques;
6. to help them develop professionalism and pride;
7. to help them think reflectively and to be involved in decision making (p. 304)

These goals are certainly important, and I would like to discuss their overall attainment in light of the different sets of competencies needed for elementary and secondary schools.

Meeting the Challenge

Given the complexity and the fundamental function of the methods course which, in essence, is the place where prospective teachers address the theoretical and practical aspects of what to do in the foreign language K-12 classroom, one would hope that the methods instructor would have expertise in many areas. These areas include second language acquisition, applied linguistics, approaches and methods in language teaching, child and adolescent psychology and development, and the various languages of the prospective teachers. Additionally, one would expect the methods instructor to have considerable experience with both elementary and secondary schools, and to have dealt with "real" school learners as opposed to those "studied in books." Many professionals, including methods instructors themselves, would agree that all these qualifications, although ideal, are relatively impractical and unrealistic. The reality is that methods instructors, although they are very knowledgeable about the theories of second language learning and innovative methodologies in foreign language teaching, do not speak all the languages taught in the schools (Spanish, German, French, Japanese, Arabic, etc.), nor have they read the original great Latin works. At best, they are fluent in no more than two languages. Furthermore, many have not taught (or at least not recently) at the elementary or high school level, and this lack of familiarity with the actual K-12 classroom on the part of teacher educators may in part explain why students complain that their coursework does not adequately prepare them for the "real" classroom. This criticism is clearly stated by the Holmes Group (1990: 50) when it writes that a common complaint leveled against the university is that "the faculty who teach teachers are too far removed from the realities of schooling to provide knowledge that is usable." This organization attempts to remedy the problem of lack of connection between university training programs and actual classroom practices by proposing the establishment of the Professional Development School which is in essence an institutional coalition designed to "bring all the required forces together—universities, schools of education, and public schools" (p. 2). Lange (1990: 252-54) reiterates the same concerns and asks foreign language education programs not "to boast," but to reexamine the quality of the practical experiences they offer their students. The following fundamental question needs to be asked: How can the methods course be redesigned to offer knowledge that could be usable to both elementary and secondary teachers?

Redesigning the Methods Course

From Prescription to Decision-making

Although the methods course is intended to bring some insights to questions of how to teach and what to do, it cannot be prescriptive if it seeks to help students become decision-makers. As Richards (1990: 35) stresses, methodology cannot be seen as "something fixed, a set of rigid principles and procedures" that a methodologist hands down to prospective teachers. He argues that methodology is a "dynamic, creative and exploratory process." This process entails decision-making responsibilities. Various methods of instruction and specific models, such as the Silent Way, Strategic Interaction, or Total Physical Response, can be presented only to offer an array of choices to neophyte teachers, but not to "sell" or force any particular one on anybody. As Combs (1989: 131) aptly remarks, "methods are unique and personal." Therefore, as pre-service teachers become decision-makers, they should be allowed to develop their own teaching style and choose from a wide selection the "method" that, on the one hand, fits their style, and on the other, is more suitable for the level of their prospective learners (elementary versus secondary). By encouraging students to make their own decisions about particular methods, techniques, and strategies, the methods instructor enables them to engage in the "process of becoming a teacher" (Combs 1989: 131). Furthermore, the opportunity to teach according to one's preference and interests will transfer into usable experiential knowledge. While it is certainly beneficial to have prospective teachers examine the history of foreign language methodology so that they are able to draw a variety of components and techniques from methods to make their teaching most effective, it might not be so critical that they all become "experts" in all these methods. For example, is it really necessary to have all students enrolled in the methods course prepare a suggestopedic lesson? In all likelihood, suggestopedia will not be very effective with first graders. In fact, from all these so-called "new" methodologies, it seems that Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach are the ones most commonly used at the elementary level (Mitchell and Redmond 1991: 508; Curtain 1991: 325-26). Therefore, students who prefer teaching lower grades would probably find an exercise based on suggestopedia meaningless, claiming rightfully that it does not connect with their prospective classrooms. In the same perspective, if we ask prospective secondary teachers to devise a listening or a reading activity based on children stories such as *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* ("Little Red Riding Hood"), *Le Chat Botté* ("Puss in Boots"), *La Leyenda del Colibri* ("The Legend of the Colibri"), or *Blancanieves* ("Snow White"), we may suggest that they pay particular attention to the foreign language level and interests of their adolescent students. Since teachers and parents of teenagers will probably confirm that their reading interests lie elsewhere, it is critical that activities developed from such stories appeal to them and that they not be too childish. The same can be said about songs and games. They are excellent teaching tools that are worth exploring and discussing in the methods course. In order for them to convert into meaningful experiential knowledge, they must be carefully chosen according to the prospective teachers' needs, many of whom, like my own students, already have a definite idea of their teaching preference (elementary versus secondary). While acknowledging that knowing how to enhance functional competency in all skills is a fundamental goal of the methods course, it does not have to be done through the same medium, for a uniform method might not necessarily fit the style nor the needs of all students enrolled in the class.

The Silent Way offers another example in support of paying attention to individual teaching styles. Extroverted teachers who like to talk, gesture, and move about a great deal would probably experience a fair amount of difficulty if they had to limit interventions to gestures of showing and nodding. Therefore, it might be counter-productive to have all students perform a microteaching demonstration using the Silent Way. An alternative could be for the methods instructor, or another instructor who uses this method, to do a presentation of the Silent Way, enabling apprentice teachers to experience some of the reactions learners might have to this particular method. From this experience, developing teachers can make their own decision to adopt, discard, or adapt it to fit their philosophy and values.

The methods course, while designed to address the commonalities for all foreign language teachers, must also address differentiated needs. Flexibility becomes the vehicle that enables the methods instructor to make instruction relevant to the realities of all students. Those with similar styles and interests can be grouped together and work as teams on specific projects such as the creation of a file which could include lesson plans, pictures, and other useful realia, or the design of instructional materials suitable for a particular grade level. For example, students who are pursuing a career at the elementary school level can be divided in groups arranged by field (mathematics, social studies, language arts) to work on content-based instruction units.[7] The flexible model advocated here is proposed as an alternative to a curriculum in which, to achieve fairness, every single developing teacher must do the same assignment in the same way. In order to be effective, the methods course can no longer be generic, it needs to be oriented to the individual regardless of the composition of the student population.

Better Integration of Practical Experience with the Methods Course

At this point, it is useful to recall that the objective of the methods course is to provide developing teachers with both received knowledge and experiential knowledge. Therefore, as Strasheim (1991: 105) recommends, "the field experiences that accompany the methods course have to be more fully integrated with it." Wallace (1991: 15) argues that experiential knowledge can be achieved by the observation of practice and by practice of the profession. Opportunities to observe and practice should be part of the requirements of the methods course. Generally, in a teacher-preparation curriculum, observation hours are mandated. However, these so-called opportunities to observe real classes are not always linked with any particular course. When this is the case, students tend to be free to do these observations any time during the course of their training, and sometimes with no particular guidance with regard to specific aspects that are worth paying attention to. While some apprentice teachers may be active observers who seek to gain insights into issues of classroom management and discipline, teacher/ student rapport, error correction, pace of instruction, and lesson components, others unfortunately do not take full advantage of their observation periods. What is even worse is that some prospective teachers may not be in the classroom during all of those hours of observation. At the request of the cooperating teachers, they are photocopying exams.[8] This is certainly not the norm in most teacher education programs, but nonetheless, it happens in some cases. If students are to benefit from observing actual teaching practice, this observation experience needs to be integrated with particular courses. It is, therefore, recommended that observation hours be conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the methods course. The advantage of such a requirement is to provide apprentice teachers with the opportunity to see theories and methods "in action" and to bring alive the various techniques and strategies discussed in the course. Students could be given a set of specific items related to the topic of discussion and be asked to go see them "at work." Such items can include, for instance, the effectiveness of role playing, a variety of games, reading and listening selections used in class, quality of learners' production, etc. Moreover, students could be asked to discuss together their observation experience. By so doing, they can begin to connect university training with classroom reality.

Formal practice of the profession is generally acquired in the student teaching semester. But this practice can also be done in the methods course through microteaching. Lessons prepared by students either individually or in groups can constitute the focus of a teaching session. As noted by Wallace (1991: 100), two possibilities can be explored. The first involves peer teaching, with other neophyte teachers assuming the role of learners, and the second is to teach real students. The first alternative, although it is a simulation and as such is artificial, does allow developing teachers to try out strategies and activities explored in class and to begin developing their own teaching style that they would continue to refine throughout their career. These microteaching sessions, of course, are followed by a period of discussion and reflection, which ought to begin with the microteacher's doing a reflective critique of his or her own performance, followed by peer and instructor feedback. The second alternative will involve arranging for a group of "real" learners to visit the methods class. While this possibility may require some planning in logistics, it is feasible. The concept of field trips is certainly not alien to schools. Therefore, it is plausible that one such trip might take place to the university campus. Developing teachers would then have the opportunity to experience real students' reactions to their teaching and thus be able to gauge the effectiveness of their methods. If several schools and a variety of classes agree to come to campus, all neophyte teachers would have the opportunity to teach real learners. However, if this option is not available, prospective teachers may be asked as an assignment to make a teaching video which can be done in a tutoring or a classroom setting involving real students of their own choice. The video could be brought to class and constitute the object of reflection and critique, aimed at bridging the gap between abstractness and concreteness. What is important to reiterate is that prospective teachers need to begin shaping their own teaching beliefs and style through "hands-on" experience provided throughout their professional education experience, not just in the last semester of student teaching.

Partnership Between Methodologists and School Teachers

The various changes outlined above (the shift from prescription to decision-making and the integration of practical experience with the methods course) require the participation of school teachers. A methodologist who has not recently been in the classroom may be removed from the realities of schooling. This deficiency can be quickly overcome by seeking input from both elementary and secondary teachers. These teachers are certainly in a good position to suggest activities and methods that can really work to motivate and enhance students' interests and learning. It is useful to design the methods course syllabus in consultation with colleagues from the schools in order to ensure a good balance between theoretical and practical issues. Teachers could also be invited as guest speakers to the methods class. Their ideas on classroom activities and appropriate materials, for example, can certainly enrich the knowledge base of our developing teachers. Additionally, they could be used as leaders of the discussions that follow microteaching. Moreover, classroom teachers can become instrumental in providing methodologists with the supply of real students that is needed to make in-class teaching practices authentic and not simulated. The contribution of our colleagues in the public schools, indeed, has unlimited potential. Moreover, cooperating teachers can also benefit from this arrangement. By having input into the university training of prospective teachers, they are better able to guide these apprentice teachers during their observation periods and their student teaching and understand the nature of the beliefs and practices that they bring into their clinical experiences. This spirit of collaboration is outlined by the Holmes Group (1990: 51) whose mandate is for the profession to find ways to "join the strengths of the two institutions [the university, and the public school], in pursuit of common purposes."

Conclusion

Meeting the challenges and demands of the foreign language methodology course is an imperative in foreign language teacher education. Novice teachers should not be allowed to face classrooms without having developed their own personal and unique teaching system and beliefs. It is important for teacher educators to provide their apprentices with extensive opportunities to engage in a process of self inquiry as opposed to one of indoctrination of a series of principles and procedures. The mandate to teacher education programs is to prepare professionals who possess the skills needed to evaluate and assess teaching situations effectively in order to make the right decisions and respond accordingly. Any program that does not contribute to the development of these abilities falls short of its mission. It is critical to bear in mind that tomorrow's classes will be significantly different from those of today, given the evolving character of American society. Thus, it is urgent that students currently enrolled in our programs be armed with the tools necessary to meet the challenge of a not so distant future. This future requires a new breed of teachers who are able to reflect and "think for themselves," and who are flexible enough to respond to changing times. Galloway (1991: 65) asserts that teachers need to "have mirrors to see for themselves how they are doing." And as teacher developers, we must be willing to allow apprentice teachers to continue searching for questions as opposed to subjugating them to our answers. Only through a process of discovery will a developing teacher be able to find his or her own mirror.

Notes

[1] These are adapted from Wallace's (1991: 5) list of qualities associated with the "title of profession."

[2] These ACTFL guidelines have appeared earlier in *Foreign Language Annals* 21, i (1988): 71-82.

[3] Lange's (1990: 248) definition of *art* and *craft* is reproduced here: "The *craft* of teaching relates to the teacher's specific knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge on teaching that subject matter, and knowledge on teaching in general. The *art* of teaching involves a combination of knowledge and experience in the many decisions that teachers make as they interact with learners."

[4] Various definitions of the term "reflective teacher" have been proposed in the literature. See Bartlett (1990), Lange (1990), Wallace (1991), and Joiner (1993).

[5] Grosse (1993: 304) in her study of syllabi of methods courses reports that out of the number (77) of those that reveal the course orientation (elementary versus secondary), the majority (41) indicated a target of middle and/or secondary school, 12 for elementary teachers, and 24 for K-12 teachers.

[6] For more information on foreign languages in elementary schools, see Rhodes and Oxford (1988).

[7] For more on language and content-based instruction, see Met (1989 and 1991).

[8] Several students enrolled in my methods course reported that some of their observation hours were spent "photocopying and running errands for their cooperating teachers."

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5

Benefits of Keeping a Reading Journal in the Development of Second Language Reading Ability

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Reading Journals and the Creation of Meaning

Recent research and reading theory indicate that "reading is characterized by active engagement through which meaning is created" (Zamel 1992: 462). In an attempt to develop an L2 reading methodology that will allow students to get actively involved in the creation of meaning from a text, a reading journal was incorporated in a fourth semester Spanish class.[1]

There has been much talk about the interrelation between reading and writing, and we have many times heard that reading benefits writing and vice versa. However, if we look at textbooks and materials used for teaching, we realize that the writing students are usually required to do in relation to a particular reading passage usually consists of activities to be performed at the end of the text, once the reading is finished, and not as a tool for understanding how the text works (Zamel 1992: 468). We can change this situation by providing students with an opportunity to write as they read and to use the writing both to generate and explore meaning.

Journals have been widely used in the second- and foreign-language class as a way to help the development of writing ability (Martínez-Lage and Barba 1994). However, there has been very little use of this type of writing to develop reading skills, that is, using the journal as an instrument for L2 learners to verbalize their thoughts before, during, and after reading a text. We believe that it is beneficial for students to write in connection with what they read, since, according to Freire (1983), "reading always involves the critical perception, interpretation, and rewriting of what is read" (p. 11).

The purpose of the reading journal that we have devised for intermediate level Spanish students is twofold: on the one hand, it prepares students to read by asking them to express in writing what they, as active readers, bring to the text (i.e., previous knowledge, expectations, etc.), and on the other, the journal allows them to create their own meaning since they have to react to both the content and the form of what they read. In the reading journal, students get a chance to reflect upon their own reading experience, and as they interact with a given passage, they are able to "dialogue with a text and find a particular way into it" (Zamel 1992: 468).

Incorporating Reading Journals in the FL Class

The reading journal, as we have conceived it, gives learners a voice and establishes an interactive relationship between them and the instructor in the sense that the instructor reads the journal and responds in writing to students' comments, questions, and concerns. It is designed as a tool that will help students become better L2 readers in that it requires their active participation in the reading process. In order to facilitate the task of writing this journal, we have developed the following guidelines for students. The different parts (i.e., before, while, and after reading) into which the journal is divided have to be specifically discussed in class so that students understand the purpose of this cognitive activity.

Guidelines for Students

Before reading:

- Explain what you do in order to get ready to read the text.
- Indicate what your expectations are for this particular passage.
- Indicate what information from both outside and inside the text you are using to make your predictions.

While reading:

- Take notes of the difficulties you encounter as you read the text. Be specific as to what is causing the problem: vocabulary items, word order, abstract concepts, unclear references in the text, or any other aspect you can identify.

- Take notes of your reactions to these problems. Describe your behavior when you encounter a problem and explain what you do to solve it. Indicate whether your problem-solving strategy has been successful or not.
- Formulate specific questions related to the linguistic aspects of the text, the text structure, and the content to which the answers will help you get a better understanding of the passage.

After reading:

- Briefly summarize in your own words the main ideas of the passage.
- Review your predictions and reflect about how much of what you expected actually happened in this passage.
- If the passage did not meet your expectations, explain why not.
- Indicate what information related to content, language, text structure, etc., would have helped you comprehend more in the text if it had been given to you before reading.
- Express your personal reaction to the text.

In order to illustrate each one of the three sections in which the journal is divided, we have selected a number of excerpts written by Spanish students enrolled in a fourth-semester Spanish class.[2]

The first section of the journal, where students write before reading, prepares them to approach the text with a number of expectations that later on will be confirmed or rejected. It also gives readers the opportunity to activate the necessary background knowledge relevant to the content and structure of the text. The following samples illustrate the kind of information students include in the "before reading" section of their journals:

> This book reminds me of something I would have chosen to read when I was younger. I am excited about reading it because I still like mysteries.
>
> [The book] has several pictures. I looked at the pictures and tried to guess what the story would be about. I think the adventure will center around Hector and Benjamin because the pictures in the text always show Hector and Benjamin.
>
> One thing I noticed about this section, or actually this chapter as a whole is that there are no pictures. This is one thing that has been common throughout the book, and I am surprised that there are none.

> I like being able to see what is going on in the story. It really helps me understand the story line and make good predictions before reading the assignment.
>
> At this point of the story, we already know that Hector is following Mora. I think that Hector and Mora will meet up somehow in the underground garage. By reading the section "Un puño de puntos clave,"[3] I know my assumption is correct.

The second section of the journal, writing while reading is perhaps the most difficult and demanding task. It is almost like a think-aloud protocol that requires students to write down what they do as they read. However, as difficult as it might be, this part of the activity forces students to identify and name the problems encountered in a particular section of the text. The information included in this section becomes invaluable for the teacher who will not only be able to better address individual needs but also to better guide the learner in the reading process.

> My reading of this passage has actually gone a lot faster and smoother than the passage just before. [. . .] Question: What does *dalo por hecho*[4] mean? This is how Susana answers Hector after he asks her to do something for him.
>
> Question #2: Why is it that when using indirect objects in Spanish, people sometimes write both the indirect object pronoun as well as the name of the person it refers to? Isn't that redundant? Why use the indirect pronoun in the first place?
>
> I want to make sure that I am understanding this correctly. In the first sentence it says: *Luis se habia quedado solo en la madriguera*. Does it mean that Luis had remained alone in the *madriguera*?[5] I am also having trouble with the translation of *fue*: *Cuando desconectó el aparato fue repitiendose.*[6] OK, here is another problem (this section is more difficult than the previous ones). What does the word *fuesen* mean? I do not understand how it connects the sentence together.

In the final section of the journal, that is, writing after reading, students summarize the main ideas of the passage, compare their predictions with the actual content of the reading, judge the text, and express their own opinion about the reading, the characters, and the plot. They ask and answer specific questions; they analyze the text and comment on the content of the reading. Having students write a summary of what they read allows a teacher to assess the level of comprehension that is taking place.

> This section begins with Luis listening to the tape his father left him (just as I predicted).
>
> I would definitely have to say that my predictions made the story easier to understand this time around. I only hope that my predictions stay on target, so I can continue to understand the story.
>
> As I predicted, the *motorista* and the *mozo de reparto*[7] did run into each other.
>
> This story line is not what I expected at all. I think they started out this way so that the reader could learn how the main characters act/react in certain situations. It is necessary for the author to introduce the characters before delving into a mystery. I am sure as the story continues, the mystery aspect of it will arise.

Reflecting upon why the text did not meet students' predictions becomes an excellent way to understand how a text has been written and helps students get into the writer's mind. It gives them a chance to become critics of what they read because they question whether the choices the writer has made are appropriate or not. They become authors themselves and active negotiators of meaning with the text.

In What Language Should Students Write?

Should students write in their native language or in the target language? Since the main purpose of this reading journal is that students verbalize their thoughts as they read, and since it is not conceived as a tool to develop writing ability, the language used for this cognitive writing will vary depending on the proficiency level of the students. L2 is only an option at the advanced level where satisfactory L2 proficiency does not interfere with the writing. At the intermediate level, L1 should be the language used for this type of writing, otherwise students will not benefit from the activity. However, the choice of language, of course, should be left to students. We have seen some students switching from L1 to L2 without having been required to do so, just because they were motivated enough to use the target language. The following journal illustrates how a student, after having written several entries in English, decides to use Spanish:

> *De ahora en adelante, trataré escribir estos en español. El cuento esta llegando a ser mas fácil leer. Aqui podemos ver la acción de Hector y Benjamin después de la influencia de inspector Mora. A primero, creo que ya estaban preocupados aunque el texto no nos dijo eso.*

[From now on I'll try to write these in Spanish. The story is getting easier to read. Here we can see the action taken by Hector and Benjamin after having talked to Inspector Mora. At first, I thought they were worried although the text did not say so.]

Después entró Luis. Esta triste, los padres han morido y todo que tiene es esta cinta con las palabras ultimas de su papa. No estoy seguro porque el autor ha puesto Luis en esta situación. Quizá esta usandolo para mostrarnos la precencia entre el grupo y como cada persona trata a las otras como familia.

[Later, Luis came in. He is sad, his parents have died and all he has left is this tape with his father's last words. I am not sure why the author put Luis in this position. Maybe he is using him to show his bond to the group and how each person treats the other like family.]

The Role of Reading Journals in Understanding L2 Reading Difficulties

What distinguishes a successful reader from an unsuccessful one? Generally speaking, whether in L1 or in L2, the skilled reader is characterized by the ability to interact with the text in order to establish significant connections between textual and extra-textual elements. This type of reader uses a series of skills in order to integrate the different "textual subsystems (e. g., content, context, intent, language) into a larger metasystem of meaning" (Swaffar et al. 1991: 21). On the other hand, the unskilled reader approaches the text by concentrating exclusively on the combination of letters and words in a purely linear manner. This type of reader perceives the text as a chain of isolated words each of which has to be deciphered individually in order to move on with the reading. While the successful reader encodes, that is, creates meaning, the unskilled reader exclusively decodes, replicating "textual language without reference to reader or textual framework of meaning" (Swaffar et al. 1991: 22).

This dichotomy between skilled and unskilled readers is not necessarily the same when readers confront a text in a language other than their native language. The skilled reader in L1 is often transformed into a novice reader in L2 because of unfamiliarity with a new linguistic code. We as teachers may have wondered whether or not skilled readers in L1 immediately become skilled readers in L2, i.e., do successful L1 readers transfer their L1 reading strategies to their L2 reading? Up to now, research related to the transfer of skills from one language to another does not present a clear idea of whether or not the language learner transfers reading skills from L1 to L2 (See Barnett 1989 for a review of the literature regarding this issue). However, what seems clear is that a limited knowledge of the second language frequently causes what Clarke (1980) has designated with the term "short-circuit." This term refers to the deactivation in L2 of the effective reading strategies that an individual has in L1.

Reading journals provide the foreign language teacher with valuable information that can lead to a better understanding of what it is that hinders reading comprehension and slows down reading ability in L2. It seems that L2 readers, unless we explicitly remind them to do so, do not consider the possibility of employing the strategies often applied in L1, most probably because of an excessive preoccupation with unknown words. It seems as though readers in L2, no matter which reading model they use in L1, tend initially to employ strategies characteristic of a syntagmatic, linear reading that requires understanding each word in the text. This reading style carries with it a dependency on the dictionary that inhibits the reading process in at least two ways: (1) looking up words in the dictionary interrupts the train of thought of what is being read, and (2) a deficient or incorrect use of the dictionary often leads to erroneous interpretations of foreign words.

In one of our reading journals, a student explained the sentence *lo protegeré sin que se dé cuenta* ("I will protect him without his noticing it") in the following way: "he is thinking about something to do with protecting oneself with a bill," dividing the inseparable expression *darse cuenta* ("to realize") into two disconnected elements. Likewise, the expression *una cazadora negra* ("black jacket") used by the narrator to describe the clothes one of the characters is wearing, was interpreted by some readers as a "black hunter." In these two examples the unsuccessful readers have disconnected the words from the context in which they were used and interpreted them using only the translation provided by the dictionary. When the instructor gathers this kind of information from the reading journals, she can easily develop a lesson in which at least two successful reading strategies will be presented: the need to contextualize what one reads, and the ability to reject a translation found in the dictionary when its meaning does not fit the context in which the word appears.

It seems that L2 readers are not conscious of the fact that they must call upon their skills, both linguistic and extralinguistic, to be able to generate meaning without the need to understand every word in the text. Readers who use a bottom-up approach to reading spend most of their time decoding, and "increased time in decoding reduces comprehension" (Swaffar et al.

1991: 75). Research on L2 reading indicates that one aspect that differentiates first- and second-language reading processes is that L2 readers, independent of their proficiency level, tend to focus primarily on vocabulary (Swaffar et al. 1991). We have found in the reading journals evidence that supports this belief:

> I feel as though I should know the meaning for every word, which is almost impossible. For the first reading assignment, I felt as though I was looking up every word just to make sure I had the correct interpretation.
>
> When I don't understand something I look up every word and try to piece it all together to make sense. I'm having problems with the vocabulary, some of the words I have never seen. This usually throws me off with the rest.

These comments indicate that students are basically decoding isolated pieces of language without making any attempt to create meaning from what they read. The question is whether students should be held responsible for using this unsuccessful approach to reading. It seems, as Swaffar et al. (1991) have pointed out, that "reading word for word—reading with a dominant focus on vocabulary or formal features rather than textual message—is an inadvertent by-product of second- and particularly foreign-language instruction" (p. 29). Zamel (1992) argues that reading in our classes is often reduced to the identification of a concrete idea "as if this idea resides fixed and absolute in a text" (p. 464). This type of reading, directed towards finding concrete answers instead of discovering the meaning of the text, is guided by a set of questions that normally appear at the end of the reading in a typical textbook. In this regard Barnett (1989) indicates that "since traditional comprehension checks generally focus on myriad text details, many students learn to answer not by understanding the text well, but by looking progressively through the text, following the questions as they go" (p. 134). When we as teachers force readers to focus their attention exclusively on linguistic features, we distort both the process of reading and its purpose, and consequently, its final product, that is, comprehension.

We argue that the reading journal, along with specific instruction on successful reading strategies, will not only help students move their attention away from isolated words but will also make possible for them to understand that reading is a process through which the reader creates meaning, and that an important part of the meaning extracted from a given text comes from what the reader herself brings to it. The personal contribution of the reader to the text plays as important a role in comprehension as the one played by the decoding of linguistic elements. As Tierney and Pearson (1983) indicate, "there is no meaning on the page until the reader decides there is" (p. 568), to which Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) add, "much of the meaning understood from a text is not actually in the text, per se, but in the reader" (p. 79).

Successful Reading Strategies Identified in L2 Students' Reading Journals

Reading journals in combination with explicit instruction regarding the reading process can teach L2 readers to approach a reading task with an interactive perspective that will lead to the abandonment of a purely linear reading method. There is some evidence in the literature that supports the positive effect that teaching explicit reading strategies has on the development of reading ability (Barnett 1988a; Carrell 1985; Kern 1989).

We have seen that reading journals provide instructors with useful information related to the specific needs of L2 students when they are dealing with a text. The journals are also the place for students to comment on the effectiveness of the different strategies that are made available to them in class. Writing about one's reading experience not only appears to facilitate the development of reading comprehension (Edelsky 1986; Hudelson 1984; Zamel 1992), but it also leads to the discovery of the different factors that participate in the reading process (Hansen 1986), mainly because students identify both the textual elements that inhibit comprehension and the ones that favor it. When students are asked to formulate their expectations before reading and are required, as they read, to identify the textual aspects that favor or impede comprehension, they gets a better insight of what to do to improve their reading ability.

There are a several reading behaviors that, when consciously applied, can help L2 students overcome the difficulties that emanate from a limited knowledge of a new linguistic system. There is empirical evidence to support the fact that when students activate appropriate background knowledge relevant to the text they are about to read, this background knowledge can compensate for a limited command of a linguistic system and therefore raise the level of comprehension (Barnett 1988b; Bransford 1984; Carrell, 1984a and b; Floyd and Carrell 1987; Goldman and Reyes 1983; Lee 1986; Swaffar et al. 1988). Moreover, the ability to anticipate information facilitates processing purely textual elements. The following two journal excerpts show how students react when they are able to make appropriate predictions:

> I would definitely have to say that my predictions made the story easier to understand this time around. I only hope that my predictions stay on target, so that I can continue to understand the story.
>
> I understood the reading a lot more because I knew what to expect. Knowing what to expect is also a factor in being able to read easier.

Another successful reading strategy is the ability on the part of the L2 reader to skip in the text those portions of text that are not necessary. Once it was clear, according to the information found in the journals, that students were reading word-by-word, they received specific instructions to try to read through an entire selection without stopping to look up unfamiliar words. Students were able to apply this reading strategy successfully.

> I began this challenging task by reading the text word for word. This was extremely frustrating because much of it did not translate into English. I am taking a new approach to attack my readings. My technique is to read through the entire selection and trying to understand it with a few words that I may possibly already know. This left me flustered, but not frustrated.
>
> I am understanding the book a lot better lately. The past sections have been easier to read. I have found that I can read a whole paragraph or even a whole page without looking in my dictionary. This makes me feel very accomplished! Until we were told to try and read the whole thing without looking up every word I was spending hours on one page. [I see it is true] about not having to understand every single word to comprehend the basic context.
>
> In reading the text, I am now trying to take about four lines or a whole paragraph at a time to get a feel for what is being told. Then I go back and check on words that I am not sure about or just don't know. Often, I find I am able to understand more of what is in between the beginning and the end of a paragraph after finishing a first read. For example, Toni's smart remark to Victoria of suddenly having an attack of "culturitis" came to me once I got the gist of the conversation between them.

As the next journal excerpt illustrates, students are also able to figure out by themselves effective techniques with which to approach the task of reading. This particular reader was having a linguistic difficulty related to the fact that he was not able to assign words to specific grammatical categories. After having discovered a way to distinguish between verbs and nouns, this reader can now move faster with the reading.

> The story is getting a little easier with some techniques I have figured out. I can figure out which words are verbs and which ones are nouns. This leads me to key concepts. [...] For some reason the story is becoming a little easier to follow and I am not looking up quite many words.

In the previous section we discussed how word-by-word reading usually leads to the decontextualization of what appears in the text. In contrast to the students' comments that showed how some readers rely exclusively on the first translation provided by the bilingual dictionary, we also found some students who, after having received explicit instruction on the need to always keep context in mind, were able to successfully use this strategy.

> It was easy to figure out the expression *criar michelines* because the last time I bought tires I went to Michelin and in English we have a similar expression "carrying a spare tire" to refer to a large waistline.

The testimonies presented here show that a conscious reflection upon the act of reading does in fact help the reader discover a better and more effective way to approach reading.

Final Remarks

If we accept that reading requires a transaction between the text and the reader, the act of writing can provide the ideal framework to investigate the mechanisms that operate in this transaction, since in the words of Zamel (1992), "the heuristic nature of writing allows one to discover and consider one's stance, one's interpretation, one's immediate reaction to a text. Moreover, it makes responses to a text overt, concrete, and tangible" (p. 470).

We would like to emphasize that in order to promote readers' interaction with a text, we need to incorporate in our classes reading activities like the reading journal that we have discussed here. This journal facilitates the active participation in the reading process and has the following benefits for the L2 reader:

1. The first part of the reading journal forces readers to activate background knowledge before they engage in reading a new passage. This will increase comprehension and therefore minimize the "short circuit" effect caused by a lack of linguistic knowledge.

2. By writing as they read, students discover and use reading strategies both global and local. By global strategies we refer to scanning through the text and extracting a general idea of the theme, anticipating the content of what is going to be read, formulating hypotheses and proving or rejecting their validity, identifying main ideas, identifying the structure of the text. Local strategies include identifying the cognates, figuring out the meaning of words based on the context in which they appear, recognizing grammatical categories, analyzing the composition of words, and identifying cohesive and transitional elements.
3. In the final part of the journal students rewrite in their own words what they have read, and they react to the content of the text formulating personal opinions and elaborating judgments regarding the quality of a particular text.

The information provided through the reading journals becomes a useful tool for the teacher who can use it to identify which aspects of the reading process need to be emphasized and develop lessons plans in accordance with the specific needs of the readers. Allowing students to describe their own reading process and guiding them in the discovery of effective reading strategies can make a difference in the development of L2 reading ability.

Notes

1. In this Spanish class, a novel of adventure was chosen as the main text for the course. Pedro Casals's novel, *Las aventuras de Héctor*, Heinle and Heinle, 1993, is a text originally written for native speakers of Spanish. The reason for selecting this text is that having intermediate-level students read texts that belong to the mystery novel genre has the initial benefit of getting them involved in the reading process because from the beginning they get interested in the story. In this regards Barzun (1961) comments "the detective tale arouses a double curiosity—what can the solution be?, and how was the solution arrived at?" (p. 15, cited in Christensen 1990: 532). The desire to answer these two questions provides the necessary incentive not only to continue reading but also to invest the precise amount of effort with the intention of deciphering and comprehending the meaning of the text.

[2] This course is the fourth semester of the Spanish Basic Program at George Mason University. Students in this course received instructions on how to write the reading journal according to the guidelines developed for this purpose.

[3] This phrase refers to the opening sections of each chapter in the book, *Las aventuras de Héctor*, that summarizes the key ideas presented in the chapter.

[4] This Spanish expression is an idiom that indicates agreement to do something that someone requests from you, equivalent to the English idiom, "you got it."

[5] *Madriguera* (literally "burrow") is the word used by the characters in the novel to refer to their secret meeting place.

[6] The sentence means "When he hung up, he kept repeating to himself . . ."

[7] The *motorista* ("motorbike driver") and the *mozo de reparto* ("delivery boy") are two secondary characters that appear in the opening chapter of the book.

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6

The Importance of Aspect in the Acquisition of the Past Tenses in Spanish

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Introduction

The differences between the preterit and the imperfect tenses have long been a major stumbling block for students learning Spanish. Textbooks still devote an inordinate amount of space to the presentation of prescriptive rules that govern the selection of the preterit and the imperfect tenses, rules which students find difficult to apply. Bull (1965) states that students could overcome the problem of proper tense selection if they recognize that the preterit and imperfect are not separate verb tenses but rather that they contrast in terms of aspect.

Bull (1965: 152) maintains that events have three aspects: initiative, imperfective, and terminative. Thus, an event may begin or terminate at a specific point; the event may begin or terminate before or after the point, or it may be in progress at that point. Specifically, in regard to the past tenses in Spanish, if the focus is on the beginning of the event in the past (the **initiative** aspect), the event is described using a verb in the preterit. Likewise, if the focus of an event is on the conclusion (the **terminative** aspect) of the event, a preterit verb form is used. Since the preterit can be used to describe either the initiative or terminative aspect, the correct determination of aspect, on the other hand, is governed by the nature of the event or by context. An event that is in progress at some point in the past is said to have **imperfective** aspect as the beginning or end of the event is unknown or not important, thus requiring a verb in the imperfect tense.

Aspect describes the grammatical expression of the internal time structure of an event or situation. This term differs from ***tense*** in that ***tense*** deals with the external time relations between two events (Kaplan 1989). For example, "John is singing" and "John was singing" are distinguished by tense; "John was singing" and "John sang" are distinguished by aspect. This example does not suggest that the difference between the preterit and imperfect tenses should be taught using English cues. While "was -ing" and "used to" do require the use of the imperfect tense in Spanish, the simple past tense in English is indeed problematic when matching form to meaning. In the sentences, "John studied every day" and "John studied yesterday," the *-ed* morpheme in the former indicates a repeated event in the past while the same morpheme in the latter sentence refers to a single event in the past. Therefore, it can be concluded that the *-ed* morpheme is not marked for aspect. The aspectual representation is determined by other features of the sentence. For this reason, traditional grammars of English usually do not mention aspect with regard to correct tense selection. Thus, native speakers of English are not trained to recognize aspectual differences. Because aspect is a major element when considering Spanish past tenses, it would make sense for teachers to use strategies that stress the recognition of aspectual clues. The case study presented here offers specific techniques to help the student determine correct tense selection. In addition, empirical evidence from this case study supports the notion that these strategies improve students' ability to use the preterit and imperfect tenses on a specific writing task with a higher degree of accuracy.

Classroom Strategies

While it is useful and often necessary to provide the students with explicit rules that explain salient grammatical features of the language, giving the student too many rules can be counterproductive.

Stockwell and Bowen (1965) rank the problem of preterit/imperfect tense selection among the most difficult grammatical features for English-speaking students of Spanish, because English does not signal aspectual choice in the same manner as Spanish. Frantzen (1995) cites textbook explanations as being partly to blame, because in an attempt to explain the difference between the two verb tenses, typical descriptions of the uses of each tense are often confusing, unreliable, and sometimes incorrect. The strategies presented here attempt to demystify the preterit and imperfect tenses by providing visual representations that cue correct tense selection by removing some of the ambiguity caused by presentation of the rules.

Initially, students were shown contrasting visuals to illustrate initiative, terminative, or imperfective aspects of events. For example, one visual showed a man in the process of running a race (imperfective aspect), while the other showed the man sitting down at the finish line (terminative aspect). Students were then asked to indicate which picture was described by *Juan corria* or *Juan corrió*. Similar contrasts were made with verbs, such as *esquiar, tocar, estudiar*, etc. Care was taken to produce visuals that did not allow the student to opt for either preterit or imperfect tense. This distinction is particularly important, as part of the difficulty with the preterit and imperfect tenses stems from the fact that different people may view an event from different perspectives. Lunn (1985) asserts that the initial difficulty that a language learner has with these two tenses is that most situations requiring a past tense can be reported using either aspectual label (p. 50). Hence, the need to avoid confusion is essential from the beginning of instruction.

Other visuals were then used which contained specific contexts for use of both the preterit and the imperfect tenses. Students described what they saw, or they wrote a composition on what they perceived was occurring. While it was necessary to allow for some ambiguity in tense selection, such an activity afforded the instructor an opportunity to discuss the interpretation of an event in terms of aspect. In examination of the two sentences, *Ella tenia un coche* and *Ella tuvo un coche*, both the preterit and the imperfect tenses can be translated as "had." The difference is that the preterit stresses the terminative aspect of the event while the imperfect tense—the imperfective aspect—describes the possession of the car at some point in time in the past.

Another visual technique that was helpful in depicting the difference between the two verb tenses was the use of videotapes. Students were shown videotapes of certain events such as basketball games, soap operas, situation comedies, and dramas. At certain intervals, the videotape was stopped and students either wrote or described what actions were in progress and which actions were completed when the video was stopped. Students also created their own videos. Working in groups of four, they were charged with creating an interesting scene which they filmed and showed to the class. Several of the scenes presented included a robbery at the local convenience store, a carjacking, and throwing a surprise party for a friend. Students then presented their videos to the class and described what happened. If details were omitted or more information was needed, the other students in the class had the opportunity to ask questions such as *¿Cómo era el ladrón?* and *¿Quién llamó a la policia?*

Delgado-Jenkins (1990) favors a similar technique based on students' watching a television program that is interrupted by a weather advisory. The program watched represents imperfective aspect—watching the program began before and continues practically uninterrupted throughout the report. The weather warning represents the preterit in that it began and ended during the viewing of the program. Delgado-Jenkins (1990) suggests that the use of the on-going program is a very logical example for helping students grasp the nuances of the imperfect tense.

The use of an interesting scenario was also effective to demonstrate the aspectual differences of the preterit and the imperfect tenses. In this case, the scenario was a robbery that took place on a bus. The narration was provided by the instructor using the present tense in Spanish. Several students volunteered to act out the events as described in the narration. The other students, observing from their seats, were instructed to take notes on what they saw. Following the narration, students wrote a paragraph on what had occurred. Because this activity was context-bound, there was little opportunity for ambivalence in the use of the two tenses.

Reid (1977) suggests that French writers choose the ***passé simple***[1] for the most important events and the ***imparfait*** for less important events. His rationale is that events that are attention-getting involve sudden or unexpected changes (High Focus) as opposed to events that have little variation (Low Focus). In applying this analogy to Spanish, events that stand out more would use the preterit while events of lesser importance or change are described by the imperfect tense. Through visual representations, students are able to focus actually on actions that are most important (preterit) and on the background surrounding the event (imperfect).

Ozete (1988) agrees that teaching the preterit and the imperfect tenses through presentation of prescriptive rules is problematic for the student of Spanish. He supports Reid's notion of verbal focusing which considers "the perceptual and idiosyncratic biases of the speaker" (p. 690). For speaking or writing practice, Ozete suggests that the teacher give a series of eight pictures that describe a story. Students would be given selected vocabulary which cue the choice of either the preterit or the imperfect tense to ensure both narration and description in their stories. Terry (1981) cautions that while sometimes teachers add key words and expressions of time that can alert students to tense selection, most of the time these words are missing. The artificial use of too many of such key words and expressions results in non-native speech.

There appears to be a consensus that knowledge of rules is not universally helpful to the student in making the preterit/imperfect tense distinction.

However, there is little empirical evidence to support the inclusion of aspect in the teaching of Spanish. This case study seeks to present some data that support the notion that guiding the student to focus on aspect has some encouraging outcomes.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of student errors in the use of the preterit and imperfect tenses after the students had been taught to recognize aspectual clues primarily through the use of visual representations. Data were collected from two student groups at Slippery Rock University enrolled in a 300-level Spanish grammar review course. Students had encountered the preterit and imperfect tenses only once before in a third-semester language class. Group A received instruction that focused on a variety of visual representations aimed at guiding students to recognize aspectual clues for correct tense selection. Group B was instructed via presentation of prescriptive rules for usage of each verb tense and textbook exercises that were done in class with the instructor.

This investigation is based on data collected from students' samples after presentation of the preterit and imperfect tenses. The selection was a prose passage based on the movie, *Psycho*. Students were required to fill in blanks using either the preterit or the imperfect tense with the correct form of the verb that was provided for them in the infinitive form. In Group A, 18 students participated in the study; 21 students participated in Group B. There were 28 possible entries, 14 requiring use of the preterit and 14 requiring use of the imperfect tense. The passage was reviewed by experienced Spanish teachers and native speakers and was judged not to be ambiguous with regard to tense selection.

Analysis of the Data

In the discussion of the results of the research presented here, it is important to consider two prior studies on the preterit and the imperfect tenses. The study presented here in some ways replicates an investigation done by Barnwell (1987) at the University of Pittsburgh on the mid-term exam of 85 students enrolled in a Spanish II class. The format used in his study was also a prose passage in which the students were required to fill in the correct verb form of the infinitive given. He examined student errors in choice of verb tense, in verb form, in both form and choice, and unclassified errors. His findings suggest that choice of verb tense and knowledge of the correct form are predominantly independent of each other. He also finds that errors in the choice of tense (interlingual errors) were slightly more common than errors in the choice of verb form errors (intralingual errors).

The results of Barnwell's study are consistent with a previous study by Tran-Thi-Chau (1975). Basing her research on Stockwell and Bowen's hierarchy of difficulty, Tran-Thi-Chau examined 33 grammatical categories in Spanish and found that the preterit/imperfect choice of tense was the second most difficult feature of the Spanish language for native speakers of English. She based her research on the responses of 149 high school students in Toronto. Her study indicated that 50% of the errors in the preterit and imperfect tenses were due to incorrect tense selection (interlingual errors), and 29% of the errors were considered to be form errors (intralingual errors).

The categories for error classifications presented here are similar to those used by Barnwell (1987). His study, however, included the category of incorrect tense but correct form of that tense. This area is not treated in this study since the major focus in this examination is specifically errors in form and usage of the preterit and imperfect tenses.

The following tables indicate the results of the study.

Table 1. Group A – Total Student Responses

Total Number of Entries	=	504	(18 x 28)
Total Number of Tense Selection Items	=	504	(18 x 28)
Total of Optional Choices*	=	0	
Total Requiring Preterit	=	252	(14 x 18)
Total Requiring Imperfect	=	252	(14 x 18)
Total Errors in use of Preterit	=	68	(26%)
Total Errors in use of Imperfect	=	63	(24%)
Total Errors	=	131	(26%)

* indicates number of items where either preterit or imperfect can be used.

Table 2. Group A – Student Responses by Category

	Preterit	Imperfect	
Responses	**Needed**	**Needed**	**Total**
T:	252	252	504
VT:	18 (7%)	22 (9%)	40 (8%)
VF:	47 (19%)	41 (16%)	88 (17%)
U:	3 (1%)	0	3 (1%)
C:	184 (74%)	189 (75%)	373 (74%)

VF = form errors, correct tense
VT = incorrect tense
U = unable to categorize – error in both form and tense or space left blank
C = correct form and verb tense

Table 3. Group B – Total Student Responses

Total Number of Entries = 588 (21 x 28)
Total Number of Tense Selection Items = 588 (21 x 28)
Total of Optional Choices* = 0
Total Requiring Preterit = 294 (21 x 14)
Total Requiring Imperfect = 294 (21 x 14)
Total Errors in use of Preterit = 148 (50%)
Total Errors in use of Imperfect = 130 (44%)
Total Errors = 278 (47%)

* indicates number of items where either preterit or imperfect can be used.

Table 4. Group B – Student Responses by Category

	Preterit	Imperfect	
Responses	**Needed**	**Needed**	**Total**
T:	294	294	588
VT:	83 (28%)	99 (34%)	182 (31%)
VF:	43 (15%)	19 (6%)	62 (10%)
U:	22 (7%)	12 (4%)	34 (6%)
C:	146 (50%)	164 (56%)	310 (53%)

VF = form errors, correct tense
VT = incorrect tense
U = unable to categorize – error in both form and tense or space left blank
C = correct form and verb tense

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Barnwell's investigation is consistent with Tran's in that 40% of the errors were due to incorrect tense selection, and 34% of the errors were attributed to wrong forms of the right tense (p. 10). An analysis of interlingual errors in Group B is consistent with Barnwell's and Tran's studies in that more errors are committed in tense selection (31%) than form errors, which account for 10% of total errors made. However, it should be noted that errors in verb tense for Group A account for only 8% of the total errors made in tense selection, a fact that lends support to the case that teaching the student to recognize aspectual cues is valid. Intralingual errors are slightly higher for this group (17%) than for Group B.

These two investigations, however, did not attribute the success or failure of the acquisition of the preterit or imperfect tense to any specific methodology or strategy. The study described here indicates that guiding students to recognize aspectual cues that signal the preterit or imperfect tense has a more positive impact on the acquisition of these two verb tenses.

While it should be noted that the task of assigning a form error to a specific category is somewhat questionable since the verb tense is determined by morphology, it did not pose a problem in this investigation. Because of the dissimilarity of the verb endings between the preterit and imperfect tenses, the investigator, who is an experienced Spanish professor, was able to categorize the inaccurate verb forms with a high degree of accuracy by concentrating on the use of the verb ending. The irregular preterits created most of the problems in classification as students tended to confuse the irregular preterit stems and imperfect endings. Examples of these are *_pusia_, *_hicia_, and *_quisia_ (* = nonce forms). Since it could not be determined which verb tense the student had in mind, these forms fell under the classification U (unable to categorize). In addition to the spaces that were left blank, errors consisted of incorrect verb forms such as the use of the infinitive or present participle. In other instances, some forms were impossible to assign to a category because there were errors in both form and verb tense. For example, the entry *_pusia_, a non-existent form, fell into this category, as the stem *pus-*, is clearly the irregular preterit stem of *poner*, while the *-ia* verb ending is a marker for the imperfect tense. An entry classified as VF (error in form of the verb, but correct choice of tense) indicates that the student was aware of which verb tense was necessary but used either the wrong verb ending, committed a spelling error (*_conozió_) or used an *-ar* verb ending on an *-er* or *-ir* verb or vice versa. The incorrect verb form *_ponaba_ fell into this category. The category VT (error in tense selection) included not only errors with the preterit and imperfect tenses but also the use of other tenses such as the present tense or the subjunctive. Group A committed fewer errors in tense selection—7% of total preterits needed and 9% of total imperfects needed than Group B—28% of total preterits needed and 34% of total imperfects needed. The majority of Group A errors occurred in the VF area—incorrect form of the verb, correct verb tense. In other words, Group A could select the correct tense but committed more errors in morphology. The ability to produce the correct form of the verb is the only category in which Group B had fewer errors. This finding could be due to the explicit teaching of grammatical rules and more emphasis on pattern practice in instruction.

It is also interesting to note that Group B had considerably fewer errors in morphology of the imperfect tense (6%) than Group A (16%). If only tense selection is considered, Group A selected the preterit with approximately 93% accuracy in the preterit and 91% accuracy for the imperfect tense. Group B's results are less encouraging for overall tense selection. Group B chooses the preterit with 65% accuracy and the imperfect tense with 62% accuracy. Thus, it appears that Group A has less difficulty choosing the correct tense but is less accurate in morphology. In addition, there were only three errors in the preterit tense that were unable to be classified as errors in either form or verb tense in Group A, while Group B had 22 errors in the preterit and 12 in the imperfect tense that could not be classified. The total percentage of C (correct tense selection and verb form) for Group A is 74% for the preterit and 75% for the imperfect tense. While this rate may appear to fall into the "average" category, the results are overwhelmingly better when compared with Group B responses at 50% for correct use of the preterit and 56% for use of the imperfect tense.

Conclusion

The intention of this investigation was to determine if teaching students to recognize aspectual cues using a variety of visual representations was conducive to correct tense selection of the past tenses in Spanish. The research presented here indicates that Group B had greater difficulty making the preterit/imperfect tense distinction as well as producing the forms accurately. Group B's performance reinforces the notion that discussion of the prescriptive rules that govern preterit/imperfect tense selection is not particularly useful in helping students acquire the past tenses in Spanish. The inclusion of aspect appears to have merit in the teaching of the preterit and imperfect tense because it forces the student to concentrate on the conceptual differences between the two tenses. Also, the student must take into account the idiosyncratic nature of the language in that what the speaker wants to communicate governs the use of either the preterit or imperfect tense. That is to say, the content of the message determines the form.

Note

[1] In French, the *passé simple* is considered a literary past tense. Its conversational equivalent is the *passé composé*. In most cases, rules of use and aspectual discussions apply to both tenses.

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7

Authentic Videos in the Classroom

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Introduction

Videos prepared specifically for instructional use in the foreign language classroom frequently continue a long tradition of presenting the Western European or North American view of other cultures, especially of Third World cultures. These videos tend to fall into one of two broad categories: National Geographic-like portrayals of the curious customs of some distant culture, or the transformation of the other culture into a miniature replica of our own. It is as if the real Latin America would be too distasteful for the Western appetite. This separation into "us" as the civilized, the powerful, the educated, versus "them," the curious, the backward, the objects of our study, further limits the possibility of truly getting inside another culture.

The distinction of "us" versus "them" has a long history in the way in which one culture views another. A brief review of the literature on this topic will provide the background for the discussion of how this concept is perpetuated in many videos currently on the market. The benefits of authentic videos[1] in the classroom will then be discussed, exemplified by Spanish language videos that are illustrated either through transcripts or through short descriptions of their content. Finally, possible follow-up activities will be presented.

Review of the Literature

The measuring of other cultures vis-à-vis the yardstick of one's own culture can be traced back as far as the ancient Greeks, who labeled all those who were not Greeks as barbarians or foreigners. They were considered "incomprehensible, eccentric, and inferior, not just foreign nationality but also evil..." (Kristeva 1991: 51). Good barbarians, or foreigners, were those people who were perfectible and who could be assimilated into Greek culture (Kristeva 1991: 52).

This separation of the local culture from that of the foreigner or outsider is perpetuated down to the present day. Outsiders, better known as tourists, generally remain on the periphery of the local culture. Their travel experience is usually limited to the major points of interest such as beaches, museums, monuments, and archeological sites. The happy tourist is one who can live a lifestyle in the foreign country that matches, as closely as possible, his/her lifestyle at home. Kristeva (1991) writes that "the space of a foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping" (p. 7). Most travel experiences can be summarized as "10 days, 9 nights of fantasies" (Pratt 1992: 221), or three countries in one week. Traveling to a foreign country generally includes being guided through all the main points of interest, carefully protected from interaction with the native peoples.

This separation of the European or North American traveler from the local peoples can be exemplified by Latin America. From the European conquest of Latin America to the present, the conquering people have set themselves up to be models of how life should be. The indigenous peoples and their cultures were labeled backward and inferior. Pratt (1992) writes that Spanish American societies were "considered logistical obstacles to the forward movement of Europeans" (p. 48).

Early European travelers to Latin America, such as Alexander von Humboldt, wrote at length about the plants, the animals, and the natural beauty. The local inhabitants, if mentioned at all, were described either as animals, as slaves who served the Europeans, or as savages (Pratt 1992: 130). Humboldt (cited in Pratt 1992: 135) described the local inhabitants in the 1800s as "remnants of indigenous hordes." Almost two centuries later, Theroux wrote in *The Old Patagonian Express* (1978) that "the Indians have a broad-faced look, like chess pieces" (cited in Pratt 1992: 220).

European travelers generally remained as separate from the local culture as possible. They considered themselves superior, and they labeled the local cultures as backward and inferior. Pratt (1990: 220) states that this viewpoint exists even now: "... they (the Europeans) are still up on the promontories, commanding the view, assigning it (i.e., the local culture) value, oblivious to limitations on their perceptual capacities, their relations of privilege perfectly nativized."

It is my contention that the separation of the European or North American traveler from the local Latin American people is perpetuated in a subtle fashion in many of the videos prepared for the Spanish language classroom. Latin American people are either represented as curious and odd or are modeled into replicas of tourists. As in the early travel writings, real Latin American people and cultures are generally absent in present-day videos, unless they are prepared in the National Geographic fashion, which in itself is limiting in perspective. In addition, rarely are members of two cultures seen interacting and learning from one another. Why, then, should anyone ever take the trouble to learn a foreign language?

Videos Currently on the Market

Language videos currently on the market are carefully prepared to be well organized, to cover typical travel situations, or to tell a scripted story in easy-to-understand language. Examples of Spanish language videos include the very well-done *Destinos* series which tells a soap opera style story through 52 half-hour episodes (McGraw-Hill). However, the people are all actors, and the story is carefully controlled. In addition, this series is so long that it would have to be a key component of nearly all class sessions. Other Spanish videos, such as the *¿Cómo se dice?* video program (D.C. Heath and Company), portray Latin Americans engaged in typical tourist activities such as eating in a restaurant, shopping in a mall, exchanging currency, and mailing a package. These videos are developed and scripted by North Americans to portray Hispanic culture and language, and therefore lack authenticity. Although such videos are carefully controlled for content and language and thus can be useful in the classroom, they lack the spontaneity and naturalness of authentic videos. While all videos can be effectively used in the foreign language classroom, unscripted authentic videos are rarely produced for this purpose. Rather than depict members of other cultures either as very exotic and strange or as uninteresting and devoid of personality, authentic videos reveal real people who are intrinsically interesting.

Authentic Videos

The author has been traveling to Highland Ecuador for six years and has lived with the same middle-class family. In 1993 and 1994, an 8-millimeter video recorder was taken along to film some "real Spanish" to supplement classroom instruction. The resulting 30-40 hours of film depict real-life situations, with real people speaking naturally. There were no scripts and no control over the topics. Segments of these videos were then selected to supplement classroom learning. Each segment is a self-contained unit and lasts from 1 to 15 minutes. Because of its short running time, a given video can be shown several times in a single class session, allowing for maximum comprehension and multiple follow-up activities.

These video segments can be divided into two broad categories: language and culture. While both language and culture are inherent in all authentic videos, segments are primarily labeled "language" if the speech they contain coincides with the language level of the students. Since the language ability of the students varies according to the course in which they are enrolled, the same video can be labeled "language" when shown in an advanced class and as "culture" when used in a beginning language class.

The language segments can be easily understood by students and can be selected for use at a variety of different levels. Sample levels and topics include:

Elementary Spanish (First Year)

1. A greeting sequence.
2. An 11-year-old boy talking about his classes and his hobbies.
3. A mother telling about her family.

Intermediate Spanish (Second Year)

1. How to prepare a local dish.
2. A lady describing her daily routine.
3. An 11-year-old boy giving a tour of his house.

Advanced Spanish (Third Year and Above)

1. Indians dyeing wool and weaving wall-hangings.
2. Celebrating a person's saint's day.
3. Local gossip, such as Dracula's being alive and living in Peru.

The segments labeled "culture" are more difficult to understand but are more typically Hispanic. Many people are present, and they frequently talk at the same time. These videos can be used at all levels when the focus is on understanding the culture. Topics include:

- Making *morcilla*, a type of sausage
- Harvesting corn and celebrating the harvest
- Shopping for food in the open-air market
- Partying (food, drink, loud music, and lots of dancing)
- Watching World Cup Soccer being played in the U.S.

Written activities that are adjusted to the language proficiency level of the students have been developed to accompany these video segments. When the video is appropriate for the language ability of the students, activities include fill-in-the-blanks of the text with the missing words, and questions in Spanish focusing on content. For example, in one video that can be easily used in a first-year class, an 11-year-old boy is filmed in his bedroom, telling about himself. He says:

> *Yo me llamo Cristian David Valenzuela. Vivo en Quichinche, parroquia, Otavalo, ciudad, Imbabura, provincia, y Ecuador, país. A mí me gusta el fútbol. Tengo once años. Tengo un hermano, llamado Giovanny. Me gusta escribir. Estoy estudiando en una escuela de Otavalo. Tengo asignaturas como matemáticas, ciencias naturales, inglés, dibujo, cultura física, y estudios sociales. La materia que más me gusta es el inglés. Mis padres me han puesto en una escuela de ciudad para que progrese y sea algo en la vida.*
>
> (My name is Cristian David Valenzuela. I live in Quichinche, the parish, Otavalo, the city, Imbabura, the province, and Ecuador, the country. I like soccer. I am eleven years old. I have a brother named Giovanny. I like to write. I am studying in a school in Otavalo. I have subjects like math, natural science, English, drawing, physical education, and social studies. The subject that I like best is English. My parents have put me in a city school so that I progress and become something in life.)

- A fill-in-the-blank (cloze) exercise could be used to accompany this video segment. The words selected for omission are those that best reflect the vocabulary or grammatical forms commonly taught in a beginning Spanish class.

> *Yo me _____ Cristian David Valenzuela. _____ en Quichinche, parroquia, Otavalo, _____, Imbabura, _____, y Ecuador, _____. A mí _____ el fútbol. Tengo _____ años. Tengo un _____, llamado Giovanny. Me gusta _____. _____ estudiando en una escuela de Otavalo. Tengo asignaturas como _____, ciencias naturales, _____, dibujo, cultura física, y estudios sociales. La materia que más me gusta es _____. Mis _____ me han puesto en una escuela de ciudad para que progrese y sea algo en la vida.*

(My _____ is Cristian David Valenzuela _____ in Quichinche, the parish, Otavalo, _____, Imbabura, _____, and Ecuador, _____ I _____ soccer. I am _____ years old. I have a _____, named Giovanny. I like _____ _____ studying in a school in Otavalo. I have subjects like _____, natural sciences, _____, drawing, physical education, and social studies. The subject that I like best is _____. My _____ have put me in a city school so that I progress and become something in life.)

Another activity for this same video would be the use of follow-up questions in Spanish that could either be asked orally by the professor or distributed in written form and answered by the students (either individually or in groups.) The professor could check the written answers by asking the same questions orally. Sample questions include the following:

1. *¿Cómo se llama?*	(What is his name?)
2. *¿Dónde vive?*	(Where does he live?)
3. *¿Qué le gusta?*	(What does he like?)
4. *¿Cuántos años tiene?*	(How old is he?)
5. *¿Cuántos hermanos tiene?*	(How many brothers and sisters does he have?)
6. *¿Cómo se llama su hermano?*	(What is his brother's name?)
7. *¿Qué está estudiando?*	(What is he studying?)
8. *¿Qué materia más le gusta?*	(What subject does he like best?)
9. *¿Por qué está en una escuela de ciudad?*	(Why is he in a city school?)

Cultural observations that can be discussed in English include his clothing (he is wearing blue jeans and a t-shirt from the United States with words in English) and the way in which he has decorated his room (he has stickers all over the head of his bed, and pictures of the family and soccer players on the wall behind him). In short, he is a typical 11-year-old, whether Ecuadorian or American. Such observations serve as points of contact between the American students and the foreign culture.

Another activity to accompany this same video would be the distribution of the speaker's class schedule, followed by questions in Spanish about his classes. For example:

1. *¿Qué clases tiene David los lunes?*
   (What classes does David have on Mondays?)
2. *¿Qué clases tiene los miércoles por la mañana?*
   (What classes does he have on Wednesday mornings?)
3. *¿Qué significa "recreo"?*
   (What does "*recreo*" mean?)
4. *¿Qué actividades hace en la clase de cultura física?*
   (What activities does he do in the physical education class?)

Once again, a point of contact is made between members of these two cultures, since student life is quite similar regardless of the country.

Several follow-up activities based on this video can be assigned for homework, followed by oral work in class. One possibility is to have students write out their schedules in Spanish following the model of the boy's schedule. In the following class session, students could be paired up and asked to fill in a blank schedule form for their partner by asking questions in Spanish.

Students could also write a short paragraph for homework telling about themselves modeled upon the fill-in-the-blank transcript. These paragraphs could then be exchanged in class in groups of three, with person A asking person B questions about person C. The answers could be found in each student's written paragraph. Grammatical forms could be practiced by asking students to rewrite the third person questions ("he," "she") in the second person ("you"). These questions could then be used orally to interview other classmates. A follow-up homework assignment might be to write a paragraph in Spanish about one of the students they interviewed, thereby converting first person answers ("I") back to the third person ("he," "she").

When the level of Spanish is too difficult for the level of the students, cultural observation questions in English may be used, or questions in Spanish with the students allowed to answer in English if necessary. It is important that these cultural videos not be perceived by the students as too difficult for their language level. For this reason, the use of Spanish, while encouraged, should not be required by the professor. An example of a video used to stress culture is a saint's day celebration. Although it contains Spanish on the advanced level, it can be shown in a first-year Spanish class. Possible cultural questions might include:

1. Whose saint's day are they celebrating?
2. How is it celebrated?
3. What food is served?

4. Who gives the speech honoring the person?
5. What problem is the little boy having?
6. How do the adults treat the little boy?
7. How do the people interact?
8. How are they dressed?
9. How does this celebration compare to a birthday party in the United States?
10. What is a saint's day?

Another possibility would be to distribute a simplified list of these questions in Spanish, with several multiple choice answers provided. The students could work in groups to determine the answers. For example:

1. *¿Qué están celebrando?* (What are they celebrating?)
    a. *la Navidad* (Christmas)
    b. *el Día del Santo* (the saint's day)
    c. *el Día de San Valentín* (Valentine's Day)

2. *¿De quién es este día importante?* (Whose important day is this?)
    a. *del abuelo* (the grandfather's)
    b. *del padre* (the father's)
    c. *del niño* (the little boy's)

3. *¿Qué comida se sirve?* (What food is served?)
    a. *hamburguesas y papas fritas* (hamburgers and French fries)
    b. *una sopa con papas* (a soup with potatoes)
    c. *sándwiches de queso* (cheese sandwiches)

4. *¿Qué quiere el niño?* (What does the little boy want?)
    a. *quiere dormir* (he wants to sleep)
    b. *quiere jugar al fútbol* (he wants to play soccer)
    c. *quiere comer el pastel* (he wants to eat the cake)

5. *¿Cuántas personas están presentes?* (How many people are present?)
    a. *dos o tres* (two or three)
    b. *cuatro o cinco* (four or five)
    c. *más de seis* (more than six)

Another activity that can be used with any of the videos is a type of "scavenger hunt." Students are provided with a list of ten to twenty items in Spanish, and as they watch the video they circle the items that they see. For example, a list of items for the saint's day video might include the following:

muchas personas	(many people)
una pizarra	(a blackboard)
una mesa	(a table)
un pastel	(a cake)
varias sillas	(several chairs)
la sopa	(soup)
el café	(coffee)
la tiza	(chalk)
un mapa	(a map)
un mantel	(a tablecloth)

This activity is especially suited for videos that are too linguistically advanced for the proficiency level of the class. Students do not have to understand what is being said to complete this activity successfully.

Many of the videos include the author as she shares Ecuadorian daily life. In some ways these are the most important videos, for they show cross-cultural interaction and communication in the very language that the students are studying. The messages of these segments, easily forgotten in a required beginning language class, include that

1. Spanish is actually used for communication.
2. An English speaker can become fluent in Spanish.
3. Native Spanish speakers are not offended by, or feel the need to correct, every little grammar mistake made by a language student.
4. People from different cultures can enjoy spending time together.
5. Cultural sharing flows in two directions.
6. It is possible to "fit in" and be accepted in a different culture.
7. Perhaps studying abroad would not be such a scary experience.

All these videos can be incorporated in one way or another into all classes, from Spanish 1 to Spanish Phonetics to Contemporary Hispanic Culture. I most frequently used these videos in my first-year Spanish course. The 50-minute once-a-week lab time was used primarily to show videos of Ecuador. The students were told to watch for comparisons to our own culture, and at the end of each session we discussed their questions and observations.

Students noticed a wide variety of things, ranging from the fact that there is a Pizza Hut restaurant in Quito to the fact that Hispanic families appear closer than American families.

Several first-year students commented on the videos in their in-class evaluations. For example, a "B" student wrote: "Above all, the labs were what I found to be most exciting. She brought film from her trip to Ecuador, allowing me not only language but a view into South American culture. It is amazing to see how these people live, their language, traditions, and means of life." A "C" student wrote: "During lab, her videos about Ecuador were better than doing worksheets. The videos helped to broaden our understanding of different cultures."

A final assignment was given to these same first-year students. They were asked to write approximately two pages in English comparing and contrasting life in the U.S. and in Ecuador. They were told to try to include the same number of similarities as differences to avoid the "they are weird, we are normal" syndrome. (Two of these papers are included in the appendix.) It is interesting that the papers with the greatest cultural insight were not written by "A" students. Perhaps these videos provide a way to reach students who are less interested in learning a language. One student, after discussing many of the similarities and differences, concluded her paper with:

> Even with all the similarities, these people of Ecuador continued to seem so different. I did not feel I could relate to them with their different customs and practices. But when I saw the little boy, I saw my little boy. Not only did they look the same age, but they did the same things. I know it sounds strange, but they weren't really people until then. Beyond the language barriers and all their differences, that little child was the connection that put everything into perspective for me. Ecuador is not a country of inferior people nor of uncivilized barbarians. It is merely a place where ordinary people live ordinary lives, just a little different from our own.

As this paragraph illustrates, authentic videos allow the students to individually determine how they can best relate to the other people and culture.

Conclusion

Spanish language videos have been used in this paper to exemplify the advantages of authentic videos vis-à-vis professional scripted videos. The same could be said for authentic videos filmed in any language and culture.

Other countries and cultures are not just two upper-class actors from the country in question eating in a restaurant, buying train tickets, and converting dollars into the local currency. Many videos that are prepared for use in the foreign language classroom tend to sanitize life in other countries so that it might become more palatable to the American student. Such videos turn the inhabitants of the foreign country into copies of ourselves—very similar culturally, non-threatening, rather boring, and very much "the other," often portrayed as behaving just like American tourists. While these videos do portray common travel situations, they are carefully scripted for comprehension on the part of the student and do not represent the reality that most will face when they travel to another country. The severe culture shock experienced by some students in their first trip abroad might well be alleviated by their first experiencing a foreign culture through authentic videos.

Videos that are unscripted and that depict real life as it actually occurs are intrinsically more interesting and reveal the fact that people come in all shapes, sizes, ages, and personalities. The language used in such videos is completely authentic, and although it is sometimes difficult to understand, it is exactly the language that students will hear when they travel abroad.

When such videos also include the outsider, such as the Spanish professor from South Carolina, the message is that, rather than being "us" versus "them," we are all one "us." The sharing that ensues when a member of one culture participates fully in another culture is valuable to everyone and makes the world a smaller, more fascinating, and more caring place in which to live.

Note

[1] The term "authentic videos" is used here to refer to unscripted videos filmed of real people performing their daily activities and not to televised materials.

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Appendix

Papers Written by First-Year Spanish Students

Paper 1 - Diversified Societies

Ecuadorian lifestyles and North American lifestyles are unique and diversified, yet they also share similarities. Personally, I would find it difficult to adjust to living in Ecuador or any other foreign country, even with numerous similarities. Before I say anymore, let me give a glimpse into Ecuadorian society' acknowledging their differences and similarities.

Firstly, they have similar plumbing facilities which include toilets and showers. They are not as sophisticated looking or working as our facilities, but "something is better than nothing." Their cities are modernized to include fast food restaurants such as Pizza Hut, and hotels whose price range is between sixty and eighty dollars. The only conflict here is that in the U.S. these things are even found in small towns, such as Clemson, where they aren't in Ecuador. Education-wise the kids still partake in recess, but I don't know much about inside the classroom. Unlike here, except for parochial schools, the children wear uniforms to school. Outside of school, the kids wear sport shirts with their favorite U.S. sports teams.

Ecuadorians also love to host and partake in celebrations, especially birthdays. Yet, they also hold parties for Saint's days and the buying of new homes, etc. This is quite abnormal in the U.S. Of course, drinking is apart of these festivities and part of American festivities. But, they do indulge a little bit more than we do, in some cases (not all). Also, like many of us, they wish and work hard to acquire more and more money.

We must remember that there is an abundance of differences between these two countries also. Luxuries we take for granted here such as garbage disposals, dishwashers, washers and dryers, and phones are not available to most Ecuadorians. Some are more fortunate, but most are not. Also on the same note, women don't generally drive in Ecuador. It seems to me that it's not a necessity there like it is here.

Family life and relationships are valued there like they are here. But, the families are much bigger on the average in Ecuador, and closer. For example, children ask for blessings when they greet their parents. This is unheard of in America!

A few other extra things are socialized medicine for everyone, ice cream is a luxury unlike here, and house decorations include religious pictures, which are an uncommon sight in most American homes. Overall, I enjoyed learning about a culture very different from my own and because my eyes were opened to many similarities I never knew existed.

Paper 2 - Untitled

The similarities between Ecuador and American culture are many. I found that each culture influences the other. Some similarities, such as kids dying to open presents, are just biological. Of course they have television shows, some of which are American and dubbed into Spanish. They have musical shows on T.V. too. There are billboards, traffic signs, public transportation, and they drive on the same side of the road. They have central plazas to shop in, ice cream stores, food markets, Chinese restaurants, and Pizza Hut! The family is a major part of the society, where they create a *lot* of noise. They love hot chocolate, and they have hot water in the shower!

I guess it's easier to see differences. Americans seem to be so closed-minded and somewhat sheltered as to what the rest of the world has to offer. It's easy for us to see things that are different from our culture and to be turned off by them. I really try hard not to judge. The marital morality is different. No phone in the houses. Soccer is the BIG sport. Private schools, where the Indians dress to distinguish themselves as a different social class. They have socialized medicine, brick roads, women don't usually drive, mass transit, executive buses, and they use the metric system. They *eat a lot*. Chickens sold in the market have heads and feet. The Coke truck delivers and sells off the truck. They make a lot of food because people just "show up" to eat. Everyone talks at once, and there's a lot of hands touching the food. They *EAT* guinea pigs!! They make sausage by hand, and one village dyes wool by hand and creates wall hangings. There are no private rooms. They party *a lot*. The house host goes around the room and administers shots of rum to everyone. They really know how to party, but there's no "line dancing."

I enjoyed viewing the videos. Thank you very much for sharing them with us.

8

Teaching with Authentic Foreign Language Materials

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Almost a decade ago, foreign language teachers and students around the country were, for the most part, apprehensive of the implementation and use of unedited authentic materials as a vehicle for learning a second or foreign language. Today, in an age marked by instant satellite (tele-)communications and superhighways, the demand for authentic foreign language materials is increasing as it has never before. With that demand comes a higher responsibility for selecting and using appropriate authentic materials for teaching purposes.

This article focuses on the use of authentic texts in classroom instruction. Any decision a teacher makes with regard to the selection and use of authentic texts, good or bad, will ultimately affect student learning. The following important questions must be answered first, before any performance outcome can be adequately assessed:

1. What types of authentic materials should foreign language teachers consider for instructional purposes?
2. Is there a common organizing principle that teachers can apply to all types of authentic texts?
3. How should teachers best select authentic materials for classroom use?

4. When should teachers assess the instructional effectiveness of authentic texts and of student performance resulting from work with these texts?

Searching for the Right Authentic Materials

We define authentic texts as all types of audio, video, and print materials that are produced by individuals using the language of the target culture for the specific purpose of addressing audiences within that same language culture. Radio, television, and satellite programs, videotapes and videodisks, computer software, newspapers, magazines, advertisement brochures, fiction and non-fiction texts should be considered authentic materials. Such a wide assortment of materials allows for rich and diverse experiences in the foreign language classroom.

However, when foreign language teachers begin to weed through various types of authentic materials, examining them for potential instructional and pedagogical uses, they often feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount and wide variety of materials available. Should all types of authentic materials receive equal consideration for classroom use? If the answer is yes, how should foreign language teachers judiciously and effectively employ them in order to obtain the best learning results? If the answer is no, what selection principles, if any, can be applied in the search for appropriate materials (Liontas 1991; Joiner 1990)?

Whether or not all types of materials should be considered for classroom use is a question to be answered best by each individual teacher. It would be pedagogically unsound to suggest that certain types of materials are more culturally "authentic" and useful than others, since all authentic materials have one characteristic in common—conveying a message to a targeted, and frequently specific, audience. For instance, a brochure on preventive health care written for young children will carry a far different and simpler message than a brochure written for doctors and nurses. Similarly, the themes and messages of a teen magazine will differ considerably from those presented in a magazine that is geared toward an adult audience. Likewise, television programming in our country as well as overseas is geared toward different audiences during different times of the day. For instance, in this country early morning television programming and advertising with its targeted younger audiences shifts its focus and message over the course of the day as older audiences begin to tune in.

The message, whether successfully conveyed or not, is defined by its underlying purpose and is tailored to the targeted audience. In this triad of text, message, and audience, all three elements are dependent upon each other and all are mutually inclusive. None of the three elements exists in isolation other than in imagined categories established for the sake of pedagogical analysis. It stands to reason then that the teacher, who plans to use authentic materials as a point of departure in the instructional process, needs to examine carefully not only the three basic ingredients—text, message, audience—but also their interconnectedness and functional unity.

In the past, foreign language teachers felt the need to "process" authentic materials by isolating certain parts from the authentic texts—sentences, paragraphs or scenes—and by presenting the text in edited form in order to accommodate the linguistic and cultural abilities of students. Today, after a decade of fervent debate about proficiency, the foreign language teaching profession has realized that it is frequently neither the form nor the content of authentic materials that causes comprehension difficulties, but rather the unstructured and unfocused tasks and activities accompanying them. Rogers and Medley (1988) have pointed out that "it is the task and the subsequent guidance that the task provides—not the text itself—that must be tailored to the level of the students" (p. 470).

Teachers of foreign languages need to be mindful of their students' ages, styles and progression of learning, levels of abilities, their overall affective-cognitive needs, and intellectual maturity. When these factors have been taken into account in the selection process, authentic materials hold the potential for producing great success. Obviously, the thoughtful integration of unedited authentic materials into the core curriculum and their use for supplementing and reinforcing the textbook content will further enhance their effectiveness. Availability, text type (audio, video, print), amount, and frequency of use will, to an even greater degree, have an influence on the end result. Having students work exclusively with newspaper advertisements does not and will not guarantee success with radio or television materials (Wildner-Bassett 1990; Lawrence 1987; Weissenrieder 1987a, 1987b).

Monotony results from repetitious work with a single text type, form, or message, and students become bored with the assigned tasks. Instead, a balance among all types of authentic materials should be sought, allowing students to experience the target language as it is used in its natural sociocultural context. To be sure, foreign language teachers cannot bring the entire target culture into their classrooms, but they can highlight important facets of that culture. Looking for materials that will prove to be effective may be a difficult process, but it is one that is well worth the effort. As a general rule, the teacher should keep in mind that the selection of authentic text types should be based on similar characteristics, regardless of the medium that defines them. (See Appendix 1.)

Setting the Parameters for Authentic Text Selection

The organizing principles offered below should not be regarded as ironclad rules, but as suggestions that help set the parameters around which all authentic materials may be generically organized and sequenced. As such, they are intended to help foreign language teachers in their attempt to choose and use the "right" materials.

1. Know what natural listening, viewing, reading, and writing behaviors are and are not. Without this knowledge, you might ask students to engage in a behavior that a native speaker of the target culture would reject as both unnatural and culturally inappropriate.
2. Put yourself in the place of a native speaker and ask yourself what is the original intended purpose of the particular text type you plan to use in the classroom.
3. Be aware of the underlying purpose of any authentic text type and differentiate between instructional and truly communicative "authentic" purposes.
4. Assess in advance the potential effectiveness of any text type based on student needs, overall intellectual development, and projected learning goals. Do not experiment with texts that you favor personally but whose appeal to students is unknown.
5. Ask yourself if more than one language modality can be involved when using authentic materials. If more than one modality is involved, make certain that the language behavior you teach is not artificial, but remains consistent with the language behavior of those for whom the text was produced.
6. Base your feedback on the naturalness of the text type and do not deviate from it for the sake of simplicity or grade considerations. Remember—there is a distinct line between practice and natural application.

Prior to the final selection and use of various authentic materials, it is of paramount importance to establish and articulate the function of the chosen materials within the framework of the core curriculum. Knowing how students progress from one thematic unit to another or from one course to another will help teachers place the "right" authentic materials in the correct sequence.

Sequencing plays a very important role, arguably even more important than the content of the materials, for it provides the needed continuum for the progression of language development. The *1986 ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* describe such a progression of skills—from Novice to Superior levels—and for all modalities. The authors contend that without considering the guidelines and the sequences described therein, authentic materials will yield less than half of their potential in view of the desired learning outcome. The authors further urge that authentic materials never be used simply as an escape alternative on a slow Friday afternoon or as a replacement for the foreign language textbook. As ancillary materials to the primary text, they need to complement, reinforce, and expand upon knowledge that students have already acquired.

Twenty Guidelines for Using Authentic Materials

As stated earlier, authentic materials can be very successful if used wisely and appropriately. What determines appropriateness is a matter of who uses what materials, when, how, and for what purposes. While such a determination may appear at first difficult, teachers are well advised to heed these guiding principles when teaching with audio, video, or reading materials:

1. Recreate for your students the receptive behavior a native would exhibit when encountering a particular text type. If students are puzzled in their attempt to recreate the native behavior, ask them how they would naturally react. Would they read an entire newspaper if they seek information only about the latest sports events? Would they take written notes on a TV program and later transcribe them into coherent and cohesive paragraphs, if all they want is to be informed or entertained? Obviously not! Numerous examples could be offered here, but the point still remains—*do not* ask students to engage in functions that have no real-life meaning and purpose in either culture. Instead, ask them to behave in a natural manner. If it feels unnatural in their own culture, it probably is in the target culture as well.
2. Reuse and recombine the same authentic materials for various communicative and sociocultural purposes. Remember that capitalizing on the authenticity of one particular type of material does not imply exhausting its content and intended message in only one session. While a video segment, for example, may be excellent for analyzing the way arguments are presented and defended in the target language, it may be equally

appropriate for some further thought-mapping and hypothesis-building activities. Keeping an optimal balance between the quality and quantity of a task is of paramount importance. Remember—often *less is more*.

3. Whenever possible, recycle previously used material, subsequently combining it with new materials. Thus, students will not be quick to develop the all-too-common attitude that materials that have previously been covered are not worth watching or reading any more. At times it is advisable to reintroduce materials because a different and new cultural angle is presented, or a new grammatical and thematic viewpoint is stressed. When "old" materials are recycled, students will become less opposed to the idea of working with the same materials, especially if the focus and the design of the task have been changed enough to challenge them at a higher level. Thus, recycling does not mean repeating old exercises, but rather creating new learning opportunities.

4. What to show? Anything and everything that interests and challenges your students' abilities. Do not limit yourself to weather reports and commercials, and do not ignore your own preferences. The best audio and video language materials and the ones you will most enjoy using will be those that primarily reflect your students' interests.

5. Vary your video and audio content, focuses, tasks, exercises, and activities. Remember, even though simple repetition is an effective device, unnecessary and gratuitous repetitions can lead to boredom.

6. Do not overcontrol the speed, depth, amount, or length of the authentic audio and video materials. Manipulate the audio and video text wisely, i.e., freeze the picture and turn down the sound, pause, rewind and repeat a frame or segment, turn down the audio portion, or blacken out the images only whenever and wherever necessary. Adjust your audio and video objectives to your students' learning pace and abilities.

7. Be alert to patterns that you can exploit, either as elements that enhance your textbook content or as principal subjects.

8. Do not randomly sequence tasks and activities; rather arrange them in a balanced and functional manner—create affective, cognitive, semantic, and experiential formats that are based on the cognitive and linguistic backgrounds of your students and on their processing skills.

9. Do not overlook opportunities to teach cultural awareness and to generate cross-cultural sensitivity when and where possible. It is easy to fall into the habit of "covering" only the linguistic or functional level of the audio,

video, or reading text. Go beyond the cultural surface level, as there are more important aspects to accentuate than clothing, food items, or holidays.

10. Select exercises that do not conflict with the situational content and context of the activities, and do not interfere with their rationale.
11. If at all possible, allow plenty of time for students to be leisurely and unhurried consumers of authentic materials. Neither the content nor the activities and follow-up discussions will be enjoyable if the class constantly has to work against the clock.
12. Watch and tacitly evaluate your students' receptive behavior. The closer you observe in which manner the presented materials affect the language learning and cultural proficiency of your students, the easier it will be for you to predict future difficulties and successes.
13. Acquaint your students with a variety of text types, thus enabling them to develop more than just a fleeting acquaintance with the target culture.
14. Do not limit authentic materials to "show and tell" experiences. Rather, create a cooperative learning environment in which students are given the opportunity to act and react, identify and evaluate, compare and contrast, criticize and empathize, and, equally important, explain intercultural values, beliefs, customs, traditions, fears, and aspirations.
15. Simplify the design and the focus of the task; *do not simplify the text*. Set the parameters of the viewing, listening, and reading task carefully. If the task is couched in well-defined parameters, viewer, listener, and reader concentration is focused and audience attention is captured.
16. Gradually change the focus from a general and global viewpoint to a narrow, specific one when viewing, listening, or reading authentic materials in the classroom. Define the degree and the amount of detail to be extracted from the texts.
17. Engage students in viewing, listening, and reading activities that are contextualized, at all times connected to their cognitive structures, and meaningful to their understanding of the foreign culture.
18. Vary the accompanying activities so that they encompass a wide range of skills, such as listing, note-taking, narrating, describing, and summarizing.
19. Always check on comprehension of text content and mastery of acquired listening, viewing, or reading skills. Never assume learning development and skill acquisition. Remember that the levels of viewing, listening, and

reading comprehension control will undergo changes as students progress to higher levels of proficiency.

20. Experiment with the application of authentic texts. Make student evaluation of the quality of the materials an ongoing process by administering the *Material Evaluation Form* after each new text presentation. (See Appendix II.) Whenever students make valid and constructive suggestions as to how instruction with authentic materials could be improved, take their comments into account and respond with appropriate changes in the design, in the organization, or in the presentation of the materials and the accompanying tasks and activities.

Students of foreign languages enter our classrooms with different purposes and needs. Their rates of learning and language production differ greatly, because of inevitable inequities in language preparation, ability levels, and motivation. The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of authentic texts may not always be attributable to the quality of the materials or to their organization and presentation by the teacher, but may be influenced by the "human factor" as it manifests itself in students' intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to learn, their levels of maturity, their interest structure, and their varying degrees of assiduity and application in the learning process. Assessment of the human factor and assessment of the instructional effectiveness of authentic materials must go hand in hand and should immediately follow each unit in which these materials were used.

It is advisable to give students the opportunity to reflect upon their performance and experience based on their work with the authentic materials. To this end, the teacher may administer the *Material Evaluation Form* after each unit completed. With this evaluation tool, students are given the opportunity to reflect on their learning experience and to share with the teacher their reactions and responses concerning the texts covered. Most importantly, students are given a voice in the instructional process. Accordingly, this process of ongoing student evaluation helps the instructor adjust and improve text and task, sequencing, or presentation over the course of the semester. The *Material Pedagogical Card*, which should ideally be filled out by the teacher for each audio, video, and reading text, helps to organize a growing bank of authentic teaching materials and to record, for future reference, relevant observations made while teaching with the materials. (See Appendix III.)

Authentic materials, once in place, should never be considered to be "cast in stone." In a process of constant experimentation, the foreign language teacher is advised to revise and revitalize continually all tasks and activities that accompany the authentic texts, redevelop materials, and add to existing materials in the ongoing endeavor to improve culturally authentic language instruction. Authentic materials can be introduced as early as the very first day of language instruction and can be used regularly as a supplement to the language textbook. They can be used to introduce, complement, or expand the linguistic and cultural textbook content and can, furthermore, serve as a springboard to discussion and debate involving groups of students or the class as a whole (Baginski & Liontas 1994, Altman 1989, Jarausch & Tufts 1988, Jolly 1984).

Work with authentic texts, especially in times when notable cultural, historical, or commemorative events are taking place in the target culture, affords the teacher a unique opportunity to make the foreign culture a "tangible" reality—one that draws both international attention and bears personal relevance to students' lives (Liontas 1994a, 1994b, 1992; Schulz 1988, Hanvey 1979).

Conclusion

In our new world order marked by the continual redrawing of national borders and the emancipatory struggles of historically silenced cultures, culturally authentic up-to-date support materials offer teacher and student a unique window to the world. They encourage students not only to take an in-depth look at the lifestyles, attitudes, value systems, and socio-historic circumstances of the people living in the culture under study, but also induce them to develop a global outlook and to become conscious of the importance of wider political, social, economic, and scientific issues—issues that may not only be current and pressing for the target cultures, but also for the international community.

For instance, by reading a French newspaper editorial from *Le Monde* about immigrant issu[illegible]n the United States or a Spanish feature article from *El País* dealing with American presidential politics, students would develop an understanding of other national and, equally important, other cultural interpretations of the very same issues that also concern the people in our country. Students would not only become acquainted with the foreign viewpoint but would learn, at the same time, to view America from the "outside" and thereby develop a sense of cultural and personal self-reflection. Moreover, the social, political, and economic issues, even though they may superficially be germane to our country, become an important vehicle for the understanding of past and present domestic forces that are at work in the target culture.

In conclusion, work with authentic support materials demands from the teacher a clear understanding both of the goals to be attained and the learning progression required to reach higher levels of achievement. In this context, authentic materials occupy a viable pedagogical place in the curriculum and should never be misused to serve merely as time fillers or as pleasant diversions without immediate accountability to the student. If used appropriately and judiciously, authentic texts provide a medium of discovery and learning as they become the bridge that spans the "textbook culture" and the existing, real, and continually evolving culture of the people behind the language.

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Appendix I

Generic Criteria for Authentic Reading Text Selection
A Checklist

I. Basic Data

Title ____________________
Subject ____________________
Content ____________________
Functions ____________________

II. General Characteristics

Is the text interesting?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Does the text appear in an inviting manner?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Are students familiar with the topic?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Will thought-mapping, brainstorming, and hypothesis-building activities be needed to evoke students'...

background knowledge?	Yes ☐	No ☐
content knowledge?	Yes ☐	No ☐
cognitive schemata?	Yes ☐	No ☐
linguistic schemata?	Yes ☐	No ☐
frame of reference	Yes ☐	No ☐

Is the text more suitable for the...

practice stage?	Yes ☐	No ☐
communicative stage?	Yes ☐	No ☐

Are the focus, purpose, and audience of the text clear?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Is the purpose of the text...

to inform? Yes ☐ No ☐
to instruct? Yes ☐ No ☐
to entertain? Yes ☐ No ☐
to persuade? Yes ☐ No ☐
other? ______________

Is the length of the text manageable?

Yes ☐ No ☐

III. TEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Does the text include...

a sub-heading with text? Yes ☐ No ☐
pictures? Yes ☐ No ☐
graphics? Yes ☐ No ☐
cartoons? Yes ☐ No ☐
drawings? Yes ☐ No ☐
other? ______________

Is the text more appropriate for...

scanning? Yes ☐ No ☐
skimming? Yes ☐ No ☐
text analysis? Yes ☐ No ☐
global comprehension? Yes ☐ No ☐
content comprehension? Yes ☐ No ☐

Does the text complement students'...

abilities? Yes ☐ No ☐
needs and interests? Yes ☐ No ☐
styles of learning? Yes ☐ No ☐
functional level? Yes ☐ No ☐
intelligence level? Yes ☐ No ☐
communicative level? Yes ☐ No ☐
sophistication level? Yes ☐ No ☐

Does the text encourage the use of ...

speaking?	Yes ☐	No ☐
listening?	Yes ☐	No ☐
reading?	Yes ☐	No ☐
writing?	Yes ☐	No ☐
cultural knowledge?	Yes ☐	No ☐

The text's greatest contribution is in which area?

Strategies?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Mechanics?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Conventions?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Composing processes?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Rhetorical tone?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Narrative style?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Imagery?	Yes ☐	No ☐

From which type of knowledge can students most profit?

Lexical?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Grammatical?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Syntactical?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Functional?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Cultural?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Literary?	Yes ☐	No ☐

Will students be required to...

draw conclusions?	Yes ☐	No ☐
interpret the text?	Yes ☐	No ☐
organize information?	Yes ☐	No ☐
illustrate discourse?	Yes ☐	No ☐
show author's intention?	Yes ☐	No ☐

IV. POST-READING—BRIDGING CHARACTERISTICS

Can real-life writing purposes be derived from the text?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Does the text invite the reader to engage in writing?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Does the derived writing activity depend upon the text's ...

gist? Yes ☐ No ☐
details? Yes ☐ No ☐
key words? Yes ☐ No ☐
arguments? Yes ☐ No ☐
theme and ideas? Yes ☐ No ☐
facets of culture? Yes ☐ No ☐
imagery? Yes ☐ No ☐

What mode of written communication does the text encourage?

Listing/Filling in? Yes ☐ No ☐
Descriptive? Yes ☐ No ☐
Narrative? Yes ☐ No ☐
Expository? Yes ☐ No ☐
Argumentative? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are students to take a definite stand on a particular ...

issue? Yes ☐ No ☐
concern? Yes ☐ No ☐
problem? Yes ☐ No ☐
solution? Yes ☐ No ☐
opinion? Yes ☐ No ☐

Does the text encourage written communication of ...

personal reflections? Yes ☐ No ☐
cultural implications? Yes ☐ No ☐
transfer of information? Yes ☐ No ☐

Will the content-based writing activities require students to ...

summarize? Yes ☐ No ☐
paraphrase? Yes ☐ No ☐
circumlocute? Yes ☐ No ☐
use cultural expressions? Yes ☐ No ☐
interpret? Yes ☐ No ☐
other? ________________

Comments and Notes: ______________________________

____

____

____

____

____

NOTE

Mechanics of writing:
Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations

Conventions of writing:
Connectors, qualifiers, grammar, style, tone, accuracy, precise word, idiomatic expressions and phrases, syntactic structures, cohesion, coherence, discourse, amount of detail

Modes of writing:
Listing, filling in, descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative

Composing processes:
Thought mapping, planning, pre-writing, writing, rescanning, revising, rethinking, editing, evaluating, post-writing

Writing strategies:
Organization, focusing, elaboration, sequencing

Appendix II

MATERIAL EVALUATION FORM

Please take a few moments to give your opinion about the quality of the audio video reading text you have worked with in class. The answers you provide have one purpose: they provide information to your instructor for improving the quality and effectiveness of the instructional materials.

1. Title of audio/video/reading text

2. What did you like most about the last audio/video/reading text used in class? Give at least three examples. Please be specific.

3. What did you like least about the last audio/video/reading text used in class? Please be specific.

4. In your opinion, would it be better to use this text in a group setting or in individual work? Why do you believe this?

5. What changes or improvements in the presentation of the materials and the accompanying tasks and activities would you recommend?

6. Did this text type accommodate your cultural interests and further your language development? If not, what where the shortcomings?

7. Would you like to work again with the same content or a similar content? Why or why not?

8. What type of text (audio, video, reading materials) would you most like to work with next time? Explain your selection and indicate your first, second, and third choice.

9. Rank the difficulty of this audio/video/reading text. Circle one (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest ranking).

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. Rank the overall effectiveness and usefulness of this audio/video/reading text. Circle one (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest ranking). Briefly explain your rating.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix III

MATERIAL PEDAGOGICAL CARD

(For Instructor use only)

I. Basic Data

Title ______________________________ Number ____________

Subject ____

Average Student Rating ______

Taken from / Found in (Source) ______________________________

Length __________ audio/video min ____ page(s)

II. Linguistic/ Metalinguistic Characteristics

Content ____

Context ____

Functions ____

Intended Audience ____________________________________

Message ____

Purpose (Circle one) to inform to instruct to persuade to entertain

III. Classroom Management

To be completed in: (Circle one) 1 session 2 sessions 3+ sessions

To be used (Circle one)

alone

as an expansion activity

as a transparency

as a hand-out to students

in conjunction with ______________

as an opener to ______________

as a continuation of ______________

IV. Evaluation Data

Teacher Observations / Recommendations

Student Suggestions

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